

INSIDE THE DRUG CARTELS

• PINK • TAYLOR SWIFT

Issue 1087
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Rolling Stone

The Joy of Colbert

How a God-Loving Square
Became TV's Most
Dangerous Man

50 BEST REASONS TO WATCH TV

DAVID DUCHOVNY
Tackles His Demons

CHEVY CHASE
Comeback of the Year

ED HELMS
The Office's Jackass

PADMA LAKSHMI
Top Chef's Dominatrix


JON HAMM
Mad Men's Mystery Man

REPLACING PAULA
The Top Contenders

**THE BEST THING
ABOUT FOOTBALL**
By Matt Taibbi

MY FAVORITE SHOW
By Jay Leno, Amy Poehler,
Rachel Maddow & More





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HOUSE M.D.

SEASON
MON SEP 21 8/7c

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RS1087

“All the News That Fits”



SEXY BOOTS
Madonna in
Belgrade, Serbia,
August 24th

Madonna's Sweet Success

“Sometimes getting onstage is the easiest thing in the world,” Madonna says. “Other times, it’s like, ‘Can someone please hit me with a stun gun?’” As her 85-date Sticky & Sweet Tour wraps in Israel, Madonna can rest her weary bones knowing that she has made history: The global run is officially the highest-grossing tour ever by a solo act, raking in more than \$400 million over the past year. At a show in Warsaw on August 15th, fans interrupted her performance, singing “Happy Birthday.” (She turned 51 the next day.) “I got a little choked up there,” she says. “It was a touching moment.”

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50 Reasons to Watch TV Right Now

From the mind-bending time travel on *Flash-Forward* to the *Seinfeld* reunion on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, we run down what’s hot this fall.....56

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Summer's Biggest Tours

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Alberta Cross

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The jam band returns with a genuinely great album. **PLUS:** Beatles reissues 95

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On the Cover

Stephen Colbert photographed in New York on August 14th, 2009.

Photograph by Martin Schoeller

Styling by Antonia Xereas. Production design by Michael Bednark for the Magnet Agency. Grooming by Kerrie Plant-Price. Suit, shirt and tie by Brooks Brothers.

rollingstone.com



Colbert

More Reasons to Watch

Expanded coverage of the 50 Best Reasons to Watch TV, including a bonus Q&A with Stephen Colbert discussing how *The Colbert Report* deconstructs the news. **PLUS:** Video of the cast of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* at Comic-Con and the kids of *Glee* on their favorite performances from the upcoming season. rollingstone.com/issue1087

PHOTO GALLERY

Backstage With Pink

As she prepares for her first solo American arena tour, RS captured exclusive shots with the acrobatic pop star and her backup singers and dancers warming up for a show in Australia. rollingstone.com/issue1087

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Video: Drug War

Contributing editor Guy Lawson debunks the myth that Mexico's drug violence is spilling into the U.S. and reveals that the cartels in this country are less like *Scarface* and more like Walmart and Amway. rollingstone.com/politics

AWARDS-SHOW COVERAGE

Video Music Awards '09

Videos and live reports from the September 13th show in New York, with Britney Spears, Green Day, Lady Gaga and host Russell Brand. rollingstone.com/vmas



Zombie and Travers

ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

Web Show: Off the Cuff With Peter Travers

In new episodes of the RS film critic's series, Rob Zombie talks chick flicks, his carny relatives and *Halloween 2*, and Jason Bateman, star of the dark new workplace comedy *Extract*, drops in. rollingstone.com/offthecuff

End-of-Summer Tour Roundup

Pics and reports from the season's last big shows: the U.S. kickoff of U2's 360° Tour, Taylor Swift's MSG gig and Nine Inch Nails' farewell in L.A. rollingstone.com/issue1087

VIDEO

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Extra

A video retrospective of the career of folk-rock pioneer David Crosby – a double inductee to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as a member of the Byrds and Crosby, Stills and Nash. rollingstoneextras.com/amex

Live in the Smoking Section: Diane Birch

The singer-songwriter brings her Sixties and Seventies soul flavor to our studio to perform "Ariel," "Valentino" and "Nothing but a Miracle" from her debut record, *Bible Belt*. rollingstone.com/smokingsection

BLOGS

Steven Tyler: "I Hope Fans Forgive Me"

In his first interview since he fell off a stage and broke his shoulder, the singer opens up about the injury that sidelined Aerosmith's summer shows. rollingstone.com/rockdaily

Live Report: All Tomorrow's Parties

Exclusive photos and video from the Flaming Lips-curated indie fest, featuring sets by Sufjan Stevens, Animal Collective and Bob Mould, performing the songs of Hüsker Dü with No Age. rollingstone.com/rockdaily

PHOTOS

Random Notes

The latest photos and candid shots of rockers like No Doubt's Gwen Stefani and her baby boy, Zuma. rollingstone.com/photos



Stefani and son



The last question Matt Ryan should have to answer is about white mess on his shirt.



New Gillette Clear Shield Anti-Perspirant

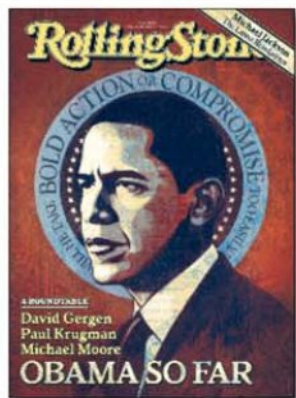
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{ Love Letters & Advice }



Grading Obama

I WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE AN optimistic, yet critical, overview of President Obama's first 100 days of office ["Obama So Far," RS 1085]. Your small roundtable of political experts was free of potshots, hyperbole and rhetoric.

Adam Johnson, Minneapolis

SIX MONTHS AGO, WHO could have hoped that we would have weathered the financial storms as well as we have? Obama gets an A-plus.

Karl Skellenger, Cleveland

YOUR GRADING OF OBAMA TO date must be based on a curve. A B-minus for economic recovery? Goldman Sachs and Wall Street would agree with that one. And a B for health care? No public option means no serious change. This administration is far from the cure-all this country so desperately needs.

Mark Prellberg, Kansas City, MO

"OBAMA SO FAR" WAS A GREAT read – engaging and cathartic in its honesty. It was also a total sausage-fest. One woman should have been included on this panel. David Gergen, Paul Krugman and Michael Moore are smart, but they are certainly not diverse.

Suzanne Phipps, Salt Lake City

THE ARTICLE WAS SUPPOSED to be a critical look at our new

president: good, bad and ugly. Instead, all Moore did was kiss Obama's ass at every chance.

Nina Cavicchi, Livermore, CA

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW about Obama so far is that the president has turned a new page in foreign-policy rhetoric. Rather than rattling sabers à la the Bush-Cheney regime, Obama talks with our adversaries. Who knows what this might help the U.S. accomplish in world relations?

Tracy Leverton, Vienna, VA

YOUR TAKE ON OBAMA SO far was accurate. He's got a mess on his hands. I just hope he doesn't give up on health care.

Jeff Skaggs, Haleyville, AL

THANK YOU FOR THE fantastic cover by graffiti artist Shepard Fairey. Just as his historic image of Obama helped change the presidential campaign, this portrait will become an iconic image of the early days of the presidency.

John Stango, Philadelphia

Baker's Blues

"THE DEVIL AND GINGER Baker" [RS 1085] is one of the best articles I've read in RS in some time. Jay Bulger is certainly off to a flying start with this fascinating profile of a true rock legend.

Paul Prior, Ringwood, NJ

GINGER BAKER MAKES Keith Richards look like one of the Jonas Brothers.

Scott Gunvaldson

Fergus Falls, MN

FORGET OZZY AND EVERYBODY else – we need a Ginger Baker reality show.

Tariq Mirza, Santa Monica

WHAT A FANTASTIC STORY! I felt like I was sitting right there in the living room with Ginger Baker as his story was

being told. For a relatively short article, it told me everything I needed to know about this icon.

Randy Hackett, Traverse City, MI

THIS WAS MY FAVORITE ISSUE. It's every drummer's dream to read about modern and classic drumming icons like Travis Barker and Ginger Baker. It's great to see that the drummers aren't always left out of everything.

Ross Gardner, Chestnut Ridge, NY

Pop-Punk Return

THANKS FOR GAVIN EDWARDS' article about Blink-182 ["Survival of the Snottiest," RS 1085]. His reporting clarified the extended hiatus of a band that captures the feeling of my generation.

Christina Best, Aurora, OH

GREAT ARTICLE ON THE REFORMATION of Blink-182. Thank you for revealing that Tom DeLonge was whacked out on painkillers while he hyped his terrible interim band,

"Ginger Baker makes Keith Richards look like one of the Jonas Brothers."

Angels and Airwaves – that makes it a lot easier for us to forget him.

Michele Bacigalupo

Garden City, NY

EDWARDS' ARTICLE ON Blink-182 superbly captured both the pain and the healing process that all three band members have dealt with recently. I was quite moved by Travis Barker's candor as he described the nightmare of the plane crash he was in last year – as well as his subsequent recovery.

Michelle Peterson

Via the Internet

Planetary SOS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR interview with climate scientist James Hansen ["We Must Act Now," RS 1085]. He is absolutely right that our survival has been reduced to a partisan issue. And yet we went to war with far less certainty than we have about the threat of global climate change.

Mark MacMillan

Somerville, MA

HANSEN GOT MUCH RIGHT in his interview with Jeff Goodell, but like so many others, he got the answer wrong. It's not the fuel we burn in cars, it's the all-consuming machine itself that's killing the planet.

Roamie Haversack, Palmyra, WI

GOODELL WROTE AN EXCELLENT interview with James Hansen, but it missed one crucial thing: that each and every person on this planet is responsible for global warming. We all must change our ways, or there will be hell to pay.

Dee Hudson

Via the Internet

'Mad Men' Mania

ROB SHEFFIELD HAS DONE it again, using his words as foreplay for us television enthusiasts [TV, RS 1085]. I'm a self-proclaimed *Mad Men* addict, and his dead-on analy-

sis of the show (the JFK-Sinatra-William S. Burroughs tangent was pure genius!) left this bird fantasizing about naked lunches.

Zoe Pangburn, Milwaukee

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WORDS TO ROCK BY

Charles Kelley, Dave Haywood and Hillary Scott, otherwise known as **Lady Antebellum**, are reinventing modern country music with their unique sound. Heralded by critics and listeners alike, country's "next big thing" sits down with us to discuss future plans, marriage proposals and the keys to tour bus harmony.


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Go to rollingstone.com/heineken for Lady Antebellum's full interview, video, photo galleries, playlists and more.

Download Lady Antebellum's new single "Need You Now," available on all major online services.

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SOUND?

CHARLES: When the three of us met, we brought in all of our different influences. I guess it's a pop-country sound, with a little bit of southern rock thrown in there, and some soul.

WHERE ARE YOU ON YOUR QUEST TO GREATNESS?

CHARLES: We're just at the beginning. There are still a lot of new fans to make, a lot more music to get out there, and a lot more we want to say as artists.

DO YOU STILL GET PRE-SHOW JITTERS?

HILLARY: The most nerve-racking are the ones that aren't routine;

the TV shows, the live performances, award shows... Those are where we're freaking out!

CHARLES: We always get a little nervous. We might have a beer to calm the nerves and get into show mode.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR BEST FRIEND WOULD SAY IS YOUR BEST QUALITY?

DAVE: I don't know, let's ask them (turns towards Hillary and Charles). Maybe staying calm and composed...

HILLARY: He is pretty even-keeled.

CHARLES: I'm pretty even-keeled too. (shakes head) No, I'm the complete opposite.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT LIFE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED ON THE ROAD?

HILLARY: I've learned to let things go. We have a full bus - so it's about keeping the vibe good, enjoying each other, and not getting caught up in the little things.

WHAT IS THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS REQUEST YOU HAVE EVER GOTTEN, EITHER YOU OR THE BAND?

DAVE: We did have someone propose at a signing.
HILLARY: He got down on his knee and he was using our song lyrics in his proposal... but the ring was pretty, I saw it!

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE IN YOUR CAREER?

DAVE: Other than a weird name...

CHARLES: Trying to find something that sets you apart from the rest.

HILLARY: Eventually you just stop trying. I think that's when you find it.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE MUSIC?

CHARLES: The pursuit of greatness. Wanting to write 'that' song, that perfect song, that will be here forty years after you're gone.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL MANTRA OR WISDOM STATEMENT?

HILLARY: Live wisely but unapologetically. To not be afraid to be who you are and say what you think.

WHO WOULD YOU SAY HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST INSPIRATION, MUSICALLY OR OTHERWISE?

To find out the band's unexpected answer to this and other probing questions, go to rollingstone.com/heineken. Check out Lady Antebellum's full video interview, an exclusive photo gallery, playlist and more.

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"THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF NEW FANS TO MAKE - A LOT MORE MUSIC TO GET OUT THERE" — CHARLES

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**THE PEOPLE'S
SENATOR** Ted
Kennedy wading
into the crowd on St.
Patrick's Day, 1964

The Last Brother

TED KENNEDY WASN'T ALL THAT different from the rest of us. Maybe he partied a bit too much sometimes. Maybe he spent his entire life working at the same shit job, only to blow it when he got a chance at the top spot. Maybe he felt burdened at times by the demands of his family. Maybe losing so many of his loved ones broke his heart.

But we aren't allowed to think of Ted Kennedy as one of us, and neither was he. Because of his last name, and all the weight and expectation it carried with it, he was required from a young age to assume a mantle of charisma and nobility. It did not fit him well, and he did not always wear it comfortably, but he was the last brother standing, so he took over the family business and got on with it. It sucks to be the youngest of nine children, the one allowed to slack off and get away with anything, only to find yourself suddenly forced to shoulder all of the responsibility that was never meant for you.

Along the way, though, something truly remarkable happened. The kid who was filling in for his older brothers, all three of them flashier than him, all three claimed by violence, grew into the man who turned their dreams into something real and meaningful. Think of him as Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*—kind of awkward and shy, but always there for his neighbors, always ready to stand up to old Mr. Potter, always demanding that institu-

tions do their best to help the community and serve the greater good. If he despaired at times, and wound up drunk and on a bridge late one night, he was saved in the end by his own hard work, and by all that he had given of himself.

There is much we would not have if Ted Kennedy had never lived. In his 46 years in the Senate, he helped give 18-year-olds the right to vote and black citizens the right to fair housing. He helped give working Americans a decent minimum wage and a federal agency devoted to making their jobs safer. He helped give Meals on Wheels to the hungry, and doctors to the poor, and equal rights to the disabled. He fought to end the Vietnam War, and he was one of only 23 senators to vote against authorizing the invasion of Iraq. He was one of the last giants of the Senate, not because he mastered its arcane procedures and good-old-boy niceties, but because he insisted that it work on behalf of the very people that it was designed by the founding fathers to restrain: the majority of Americans.

Ted Kennedy was an aristocrat, well-born and well-to-do. He served in an institution intentionally constructed to protect the aristocracy and thwart the popular will. Yet he did what he could to use its immense power on behalf of democracy—on behalf of us. It was a wonderful life.

—ERIC BATES, *Executive Editor*

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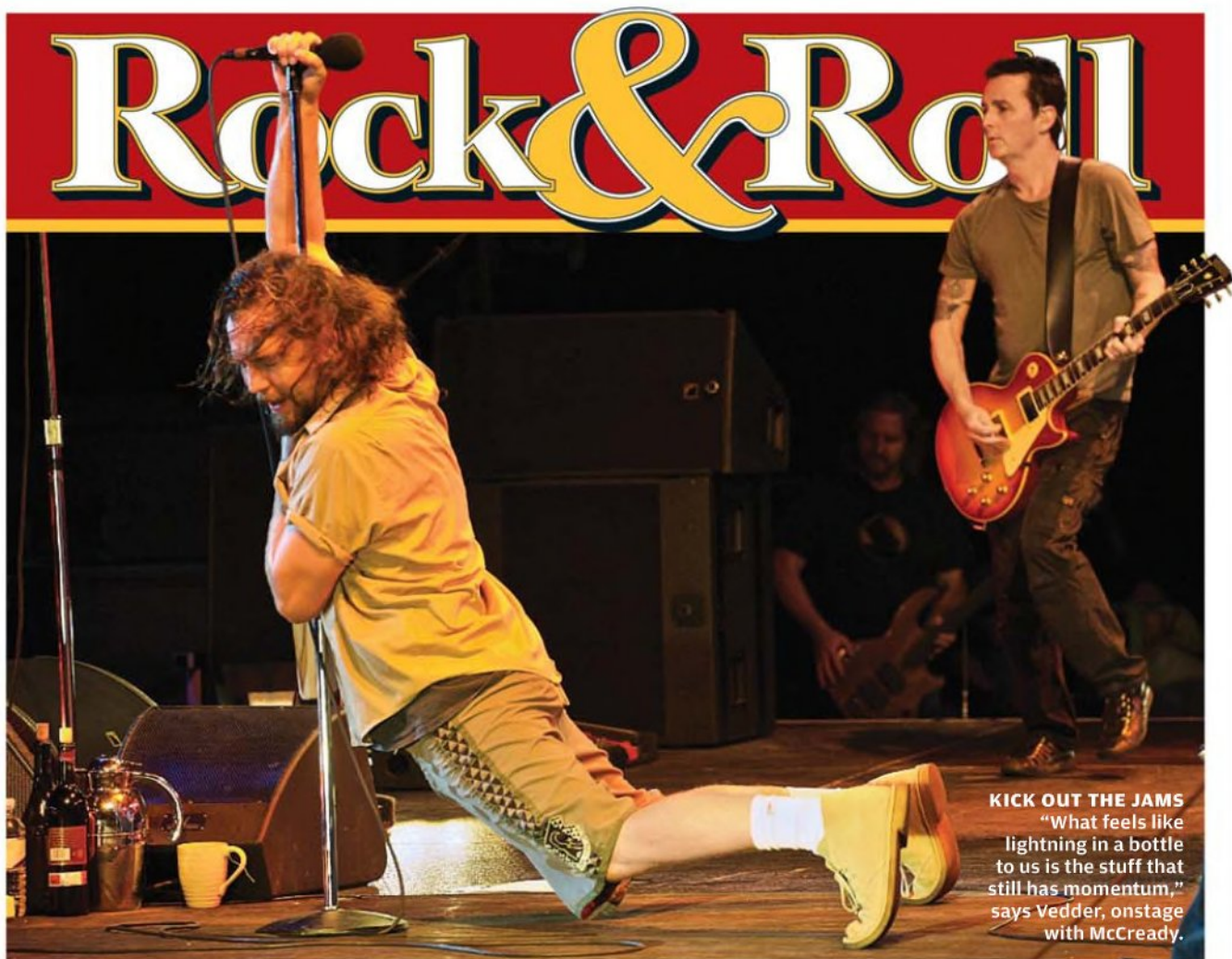
Inside Spotify, the killer streaming service coming in early 2010. Page 20

PETTY COMES ALIVE

New four-CD box collects three decades of shows, covers and rarities. Page 32

BRANDON FLOWERS

The Killers frontman on Memphis ribs, Madonna and 'Pretty in Pink.' Page 42



KICK OUT THE JAMS
"What feels like lightning in a bottle to us is the stuff that still has momentum," says Vedder, onstage with McCready.

Pearl Jam Kick Off Fall Tour

Backstage with Vedder and Co. in Chicago. Plus: Supercharged new tunes
By Brian Hiatt

AS EDDIE VEDDER SITS backstage in a Chicago arena, puzzling over the set list for tonight's Pearl Jam show, he's wearing a stage outfit that even the Dude would reject as a touch too casual: knee-length surfing shorts; a T-shirt decorated with a picture of Felix the Cat holding a bomb; suede half-boots; and a pair of long white socks from his band's merchandise collection. "We make things we can use," Vedder says, smiling underneath his thick beard. "I mean, I've never had to buy socks again."

More than ever, Pearl Jam is a self-contained, self-sustaining entity. Their new album, September 20th's *Backspacer*, will be the first that the band will release on its own, with no U.S. record label. Until the album comes out, Pearl Jam are performing only a couple of the disc's tautly arranged, hyper-melodic tunes, but their enthusiasm for the material is obvious: Midway through the show, as Stone Gossard kicks into the Stones-y riff of the first single, "The Fixer," Vedder leaps straight up in the air as if it's still 1991.

"Fight to get it back again," he howls over and over as the song concludes. The new tunes are as punchy and fast as anything

they've ever written: "Normally, as you get older, things start to settle down a little bit," says Vedder. "And you play more like, you know, porch songs, at that porch tempo - the tempo of your rocking chair," Vedder says. "But what feels like light-

ning in a bottle to us is still the stuff that has momentum."

Although the band is fascinated by the lavish production of U2's 360° Tour - Vedder even had a vivid dream about it recently - Pearl Jam's own approach is as minimal as arena rock gets. "We haven't had a discussion about what we're going to do about the stage setup," Gossard says with a laugh after the show, between sips of red wine. "Maybe we should have a mirror ball this time." Adds Vedder, "Our approach is, we just keep playing."

Along the way, Pearl Jam shake up their set lists, night after night - this evening's show includes 21 songs they didn't play the [Cont. on 22]

ON THE ROAD: ALL ACCESS

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Nine Inch Nails p. 24

Steely Dan p. 24

Cred p. 26

AND MORE

Tangled Up in Tinsel: Bob Dylan Delivers 'Christmas in the Heart'

Charity Xmas LP features 'Winter Wonderland,' 'Little Drummer Boy'

By Andy Greene

IN THE LATE SEVENTIES, Bob Dylan shocked his fans when he converted to Christianity and released two albums of gospel-themed rock & roll. Now the singer – who

CHECKING IN

is believed to have returned to Judaism – has another surprise in store: On October 13th, he will release *Christmas in the Heart*, a collection of holiday standards, including "Winter Wonderland," "Here Comes Santa Claus," "Little Drummer Boy" and "Must Be Santa." Dylan recorded the set earlier this year with his touring band, session players and a group of backup singers. (The artist produced himself under his usual pseudonym, Jack Frost.) "Columbia has been asking for a Christmas album for decades," a source close to Dylan says. "They're perennial sellers, and that's what every label wants."


The release will also be Dylan's first charity record; all of his U.S. royalties will be donated to Feeding America, which supports a network of food banks and soup kitchens. Feeding



BOB'S GIFT Dylan's first holiday LP (inset) will benefit the charity Feeding America.



America was as surprised to hear about the album as Dylan's fans were. Just two months ago, the charity contacted Dylan to see if the musician would lend his name to its cause. Instead, Dylan's manager and two Columbia reps flew to Feed America's Chicago headquarters with the unexpected offer of a charity LP. "This is a dream come true," says Feeding America CEO Vicki Escarra. "Dylan can really get Americans focused on the fact that 35 to 38 million Americans don't have food security today. It's just unconscionable."

In other Dylan news, virtuoso Texas blues guitarist Charlie Sexton – who played with Dylan from 1999 to 2002 – is returning to the band when Dylan hits the road on October 5th in Seattle. Sexton's tenure in the band is considered one of the greatest periods of Dylan's career. "I love Bob and am happy to be reunited with my friend onstage," says Sexton. Adds the Dylan source, "There's all sorts of golden eras, but Charlie was something else. I saw the last show they did together in 2002, and it was fucking incredible." 

Jackson Update: Death Ruled a Homicide


Fatal overdose blamed for death. Plus: Rehearsal film to hit theaters

TWO MONTHS AFTER Michael Jackson's death, the Los Angeles County Coroner's office has ruled it a homicide – resulting from a fatal overdose of the surgical anesthetic propofol and other sedatives. According to court documents, Jackson, unable to sleep, was given the IV drug propofol (which Jackson called his "milk") by his doctor, Conrad Murray, after previously being administered the sedatives lorazepam and midazolam. Documents also suggest



that 911 wasn't called for more than 80 minutes after Murray found the singer unconscious. (Murray, who has not been indicted, disputes the timeline.)

In other Jackson news, the executors of his estate say the King of Pop's posthumous earnings will likely dwarf even Elvis'

– with a potential \$200 million in new revenue being generated this year alone. AEG Live's footage of Jackson's rehearsals for the *This Is It* Tour was purchased by Sony Pictures for \$60 million. The film, which will debut in theaters in October, documents the run-up to the London shows Jackson was scheduled to play this summer. "It shows you him in complete control – directing the dancers, directing the band," says Jackson's manager, Frank DiLeo, who has seen the footage. "He's very happy, smiling, laughing, joking through the whole thing. I can't tell you the ending, but that's the best part." 

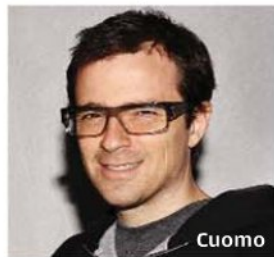
IN THE NEWS

Stones Prep 'Exile' Box, Studio CD

If **Keith Richards** has his way, the **Rolling Stones** will start working on a new record next year. "One way or another, I'll get them back in line," Richards says. In the meantime, the guitarist recently recorded songs with **Jack White**. "I enjoy working with Jack," Richards says. "We've done a couple of tracks." Might White produce the Stones record? "I couldn't fuel that rumor any more than to say Jack and I are in touch," says Richards. Meanwhile, **Mick Jagger** and Richards are sorting through outtakes from 1972's *Exile on Main Street* for a forthcoming deluxe edition of the LP. "There's new songs on there, stuff we've forgotten about," Richards says. "Mick and I were looking at each other like, 'Ah, did we do that?'"

Weezer Get Help on New LP

Weezer are putting the finishing touches on their seventh album, *Raditude* (out October 27th), with help from **Butch**



Walker, Dr. Luke, Jermaine Dupri and **All-American Rejects**. "It's easier to write with other people," says frontman **Rivers Cuomo**. "It takes a few hours, whereas in the past it took me two weeks."

The Who Gear Up for New Projects

While the **Who** are on hiatus until 2010, **Roger Daltrey** is launching his first solo tour since 1994. The singer and his band (which includes guitarist **Pete Townshend's** brother Simon on guitar) will hit North American theaters in October. Daltrey promises "different versions of Who songs," including an acoustic reworking of "Who Are You." In other Who news, Townshend is composing a rock opera called *FLOSS*, songs from which he plans to release on a 2010 Who album.

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Coming to America: European Streaming Sensation Spotify

With iPhone app that lets you listen anywhere, can Spotify challenge iTunes?

By Steve Knopper

SINCE IT LAUNCHED IN several European countries nearly a year ago, the streaming-music service Spotify has become a rare bright spot in the ailing music business, with millions of users downloading the software. While

INDUSTRY

negotiations over royalty rates continue, sources say Spotify is confirmed to arrive in America by early 2010 – and it could present the strongest challenge yet to iTunes' dominance in the digital-music market. "All the labels want to do business with Spotify," says a major-label source familiar with the negotiations to license song catalogs to Spotify. "But we're not going to support them in a way that we're going to give them our music for free."

Thanks to a simple iTunes-like interface and software that provides near-instant access to 6 million tracks, the Swedish service – which is available in the U.K., France, Sweden and three other European nations – is adding roughly 50,000 registered users every day. Among the available tunes is the vast majority of all four major labels' catalogs, plus most of the top indies'. Spotify users hear a radio-style advertisement every 20 minutes; users who upgrade to Spotify Premium pay about \$14 a month for CD-quality audio and no ads. "The question mark over it is its commercial viability," says Barney Wragg, a former EMI Music executive in the U.K. who worked on one of Spotify's first content deals. "People around the business are saying, 'Are we really going to convert people to [paid] subscriptions?'"

But now Spotify may have the one service that could entice a large number of users to upgrade: portability. In late August, Apple approved Spotify's iPhone application, which

allows Premium users to listen to pretty much any song ever recorded, wherever they might be. Spotify reps wouldn't comment on Apple's approval, except to call it "fantastic" and to predict a European iPhone rollout "soon." The company's co-founder, 26-year-old Swedish tech guru Daniel Ek, has said all year that mobile is the key to Spotify's future. "Imagine if you create a service that is as easy as the iPod, but you can bring with you a library of millions of tracks," he told *ROLLING STONE* earlier in the summer.

Despite Spotify's immense popularity overseas – and an

from Spotify and the labels say they're certain the service will launch in the U.S. by early 2010 one way or another. "The app with Apple makes the Spotify subscription idea slightly more viable than it was," says a source with a U.S. major label.

But if Spotify were to gain a large American audience, sources say, Apple could easily roll out a subscription service to crush it. "Spotify is a great-looking service, and very elegant, but whether it can get there remains to be seen," says a major-label source. "And if Apple decides to launch a subscription, that could be a game-changer in the industry." (Apple reps didn't

Showdown: Spotify vs. iTunes

When Spotify arrives in 2010, which will win?



Spotify's Daniel Ek



Apple's Steve Jobs

Spotify

■ Free if you're willing to put up with occasional ads; about \$14 a month for Premium

■ 6 million songs from all major labels and most top indies

■ iPhone app will allow subscribers to listen to any song from the Spotify catalog on the go.

■ With true portability, Spotify is the best argument yet for getting rid of your CDs.

Cost

Size of Catalog

Portability

The Bottom Line

iTunes Store

■ 69 cents to \$1.29 a song; most albums go for \$9.99.

■ 10 million songs, including Dylan's catalog, which Spotify lacks

■ iPhone users can buy tracks on the fly from the portable iTunes Store.

■ Still the leader – and could launch its own portable subscription service at any time.

influx of \$250 million from investors such as Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing – negotiations for content deals with American major labels have been complex. The labels, which have yet to see profits from streaming deals they cut with MySpace Music, imeem and other services, are asking for more money upfront than Spotify wants to pay. Still, reps

respond to this speculation.)

Executives for the four U.S. major labels wouldn't comment on the record for this story, but some of their more tech-savvy employees are enthusiastic about the Spotify service. "I'm a huge fan, I've got to say," says a label source. "If there's true portability, there's a way to make this subscription game actually work."

HOT LIST



Fill this with a caption people

JERRY LEE LEWIS

"Mean Old Man"

Jerry Lee singing about being mean and old? Realistic! The septuagenarian Killer sounds more murderous than ever, with hot country backing and sweet songcraft from Kris Kristofferson. Those fiery balls? Still blazing.

KESHA

"TiK ToK"

If you find Lady Gaga too tasteful and restrained, try Ke\$ha, who has got hooks, looks and no discernible brain activity. (Sample lyric: "Ain't got a care in the world/But got plenty of beer.") Electro-crap has a new queen.

NO AGE

"You're a Target"

The noisiest duo since Black and Decker are getting unexpectedly tuneful – this one sounds like the Replacements playing in a hurricane.

HARPER SIMON

"Shooting Star"

Paul's old traveling companion is 36 years old, and he's finally releasing his debut. Judging by this gorgeous single (with pedal steel from *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*'s Lloyd Green), it was worth the wait.

WHITNEY HOUSTON

"Million Dollar Bill"

Two entirely unrelated facts: Crack is wack, and Whitney's back, thanks to a disco-flavored head-bobber of a single, co-written by Alicia Keys. Step up, Bobby B.

The first official tour of my distillery happened in 1780 when pirates broke in and drank all my whiskey.

John Jameson

JAMESON

TASTE ABOVE ALL ELSE



PEARL JAM

[Cont. from 17] previous night in Chicago, including “Nothingman” and the recently revived rarity “Brother” – plus covers (the Who’s “The Real Me,” Neil Young’s “Fuckin’ Up,” and chunks of Pink Floyd and Sleater-Kinney).

Vedder is in charge of the set lists: “We give him a lot of control,” says Gossard, “because he’s shown himself to be good at using that control.” The singer walks

Pearl Jam

**August 24th,
United Center, Chicago**

a delicate balance between hits and obscurities. “It’s a big room, so you try to put in enough things people know,” Vedder says. “And then there’s a whole other faction that’s very unhappy unless we play something we’ve only played twice before.”

Tonight, one member of that faction – wearing a homemade T-shirt emblazoned with the words “No ‘Even Flow’” – elicits Vedder’s only grumpy moment: “We take requests, not orders, sir,” he says after the band finishes that very song, with lead guitarist Mike McCready and drummer Matt Cameron stretching out on wild solos. “You should know that by now.”

Before the show, Vedder met with his friend Tomas Young, an Iraq War vet paralyzed from the chest down after taking a bullet to the spine, who was featured in the documentary *Body of War*. Young brought his brother Nathan, who just returned safely from his own latest tour of duty. Nathan asked Vedder to play the stark anti-war ballad “No More” – and that was one request Vedder treated as an order. “If a soldier asks you to play this song,” he says, “you play it.”



PRE-PARTY Before hitting the stage, Swift paints her lucky number (13) on her hand.

TEEN-POP PRINCESS



August 27th, Madison Square Garden, New York

THE FIRST TIME TAYLOR Swift played Madison Square Garden, she was 12. During halftime at a Knicks game, she belted a song from center court as part of a singing competition. Now Swift’s back – as a headliner. “It’s insane,” says the singer, 19. “It’s like everything was meant to be.”

Swift’s show, supporting her 2008 smash, *Fearless*, is a love-fest. Fans flash the singer’s trademark “heart” hand sign and snap photos constantly. When the opener, “You Belong With Me,” inspires deafening applause, Swift shakes

her blond curls incredulously. “Oh, my God,” she says. “I love you guys so much.” Swift has been planning her concert since junior high. “Other girls drew wedding dresses – I drew stages,” she says. “I knew that I wanted to bang on gigantic drums while standing on a 30-foot platform.” Her dreams have come to fruition: During “Should’ve Said No,” Swift and her fiddle player face off on a giant drum. There are also Elizabethan costumes (“Love Story”) and choreographed cheerleading (“You Belong With Me”). Swift even risks electrocution – a waterfall rains down on her during the encore. “You never know what the tempera-

ture will be,” she says. “In Canada, it was 55 degrees outside, and the water was freezing.”

Backstage, Swift chills in her T-Party room, which resembles a Moroccan tent, with its gauzy curtains and purple pillows. An assistant comes in to spark candles and crank up Beyoncé’s “Halo.” Swift’s team constructs the T-Party room at every venue. “It’s like a piece of home wherever I go,” she says. “We have a celebratory dance party here after every show.” The bash is dry: “Even when I’m old enough, I don’t think I’ll drink on tour,” says the singer, whose mom accompanies her on the road. “I’m all about good, clean fun.”

NICOLE FREHSÉE

FROM LEFT: JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES; LARRY BUSACCA/GETTY IMAGES

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**ON THE ROAD:
ALL ACCESS**

\$35 for a T-Shirt?

Ever wonder why a concert tee costs \$35? Greed, obviously. But also, says one top manager, "There's just too many hands in the pot." Here's a breakdown:

\$3.98: Taxes and fees, like paying security to bust counterfeit parking-lot T-shirts.

\$7.76: Venue fee, split between vendor and promoter.

\$9.26: The merch company takes a big chunk for expenses.

\$14.00: In the end, the band winds up with about 40 percent.



VICTORY LAP

Trent Reznor Says Goodbye to NIN

Toward the end of Nine Inch Nails' gig at New York's Bowery Ballroom, Trent Reznor looked exhausted. "This is fucking tiring up here, man!" he said from the stage. "I'm too old for this shit." The 44-year-old won't have to scream through his old band's hits many more times: Reznor says this short club tour is NIN's last ever. At the insanely packed kickoff show, he gave the 550-person crowd a farewell gift of two hours of hits and rarities, including a frenzied take on 1989's "Down in It" and a hypnotic cover of Joy Division's "Dead Souls."

ANDY GREENE

Reznor's Wave Goodbye Tour is hitting clubs and theaters in New York, L.A. and Chicago.

INSIDE THE SET LIST

Rare Cuts, Big Hits: Steely Dan Dig Deep

AS WALTER BECKER sees it, the only organization greedier than Goldman Sachs is his own band: "We like to see ourselves as vampire squids wrapped around the face of humanity," jokes the Steely Dan guitarist, quoting *ROLLING STONE*'s recent finance-industry exposé. "We're thrusting our blood funnel into anything that smells like money." It's true the duo upped ticket prices for this tour, but the Dan have given fans a treat: In certain cities they've performed three LPs—*Aja*, *The Royal Scam* and *Gaucho*—in their entirety. (A separate night consists of a set list voted on by

fans.) We caught up with Becker and Donald Fagen before a gig in New York in August, and they chatted about some of the tunes they've been playing.

'Kid Charlemagne'

The opening track from 1976's *The Royal Scam*—the story of an LSD chef, loosely based on acid pioneer Owsley Stanley—is consistently the most requested track. The line "Is there gas in the car? Yes, there's gas in the car" has become a "sing-along moment," Becker says. "A cab driver once told me that that was the stupidest line he's ever heard."



Donald Fagen
in New York

'Doctor Wu'

The meaning behind this cryptic *Katy Lied* track is a mystery: Some speculate that the "Katy" in the lyrics is a drug metaphor, or that Doctor Wu was an acupuncturist. Fagen explains, "It's about that uneasy relationship between the patient and doctor. People put faith in doctors, yet they abuse their power and become dangerous." But who is Wu? "He's fictional," says Fagen. "We change the names to protect the innocent."

'Any Major Dude Will Tell You'

Though it's a fairly obscure B side, this strummy tune gets a lot of votes. "When we moved out to L.A., people called each other 'dude,' which we found funny," says Fagen of the *Pretzel Logic* cut. "We were trying to speak their language." But the word "squonk" (in the line "Have you ever seen a squonk's tears?") had a different provenance. "We spotted it in a [Jorge Luis] Borges book," Becker says. "It's a creature that dissolves in its own tears."

'Reelin' in the Years'

The Dan often indulge their fans with this 1972 hit, though they can't stand the tune. "It's dumb," says Fagen. "But effective." Adds Becker, "It's no fun."

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CONCERT BIZ

Bruce, Pixies Boost Tours by Playing Albums in Full

Classic discs, re-created live: The new strategy for selling more tickets

By David Browne

CD SALES MIGHT HAVE dropped almost 20 percent this year, but the album is enjoying something of a comeback—onstage. Steely Dan re-created three of their classic discs in their entirety on their summer tour, Aerosmith performed *Toys in the Attic* top to bottom during select shows, and Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band will play all of *Born to Run* during shows in Chicago and Nashville.

And that's not all: Van Morrison had a successful run of *Astral Weeks* earlier this year and will continue playing it this October; the Pixies will celebrate the 20th anniversary of *Doolittle* this fall by playing it nightly on a November tour; the same month, Devo will hit the road playing 1978's *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!* and 1980's *Freedom of Choice*. "It's satisfying for the audience," says Steely Dan's Walter Becker. "They know what they're going to hear, and they're looking forward to it."

Although the trend has been around for at least a decade—



RETURN OF THE LP Albums are making a live comeback. (1) Springsteen will play *Born to Run* this fall. (2) In November, Devo will revive their 1978 debut. (3) That same month, the Pixies will celebrate *Doolittle*.

Cheap Trick, Sonic Youth and Brian Wilson have all done entire-album concerts—it's gained steam in the past year, as bands continue to turn to the road to make up for sinking CD sales. "It's for people who are on the fence," says Andy Cirzan of Chicago promoters Jam Productions. "The event

status adds an excitement level with the core fans. It's pretty damn innovative."

Though as some musicians have learned, such shows are uniquely challenging. "The precision and speed we played those songs with is almost daunting now," says Devo's Gerald Casale of their early

albums. Says Pixies frontman Black Francis, "You're trying to find the right kind of position so your voice sounds right and make sure the feedback is just right. We're trying to have some deference to the event. People paid money."

And fans will pay. The most expensive seats for Steely Dan's Rent Party Tour are \$240, or \$90 more than they were on the band's 2008 trek; the best tickets for the Pixies' *Doolittle* shows cost 20 percent more than the group's last U.S. tour, in 2004-05. One booking agent says such shows are guaranteed money-

makers, even for bands that have burned out their fan base by touring heavily in recent years. "You can charge 25 percent, maybe 50 percent more," he says. "When you're honing it down to playing this particular album in its entirety, you're narrowing it down to your most fanatical fans." **C**



Scott Stapp is back.

Call It a Comeback: Creed Return

August 15th, Jones Beach Theater, New York

THE LAST TIME CREED toured, singer Scott Stapp ended up face-down and drunk on a stage in Chicago. It was December 2002, and the band was in its death throes. "There were some dark days in there, man," Stapp says. "But there was always a part of me that hoped and believed it could happen again."

This fall, Creed have their second coming. After not

speaking for six years, Stapp and guitarist Mark Tremonti met in Orlando in January to discuss a reunion. Now the 26-times-platinum group is on the road for a 41-city tour, with an album to follow in October. For Stapp, mostly sober and thrilled to be onstage, the theme of the comeback is humility. "Back in the day, we were young and mad at the world," he says. "Now we're trying not to carry a 3,000-pound chip on our shoulder. We just want to get a fair shake."

At Jones Beach, Stapp belts out hits like "My Sacrifice" and "Higher" for a die-hard crowd that includes his wife and his two-year-old daughter. The 15,000-seat venue is far from packed, but for the four guys smiling onstage, it didn't seem to matter. "They're actually a lot larger than I expected," Stapp says of the tour's audiences. "Right now, we're back to the mentality of 'one person at a time.' We just have to keep doing what we do and hope it connects." **JOSH EELLS**

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Tom Petty Unearths Live Gems

New box set collects three decades of shows including covers, rarities

By David Fricke

AT ONE POINT ON TOM Petty's new box set, *The Live Anthology*, a collection of previously unreleased concert recordings with his band the Heartbreakers, the singer-guitarist introduces a tune called "Surrender" at a 1983 show in Irvine, California.

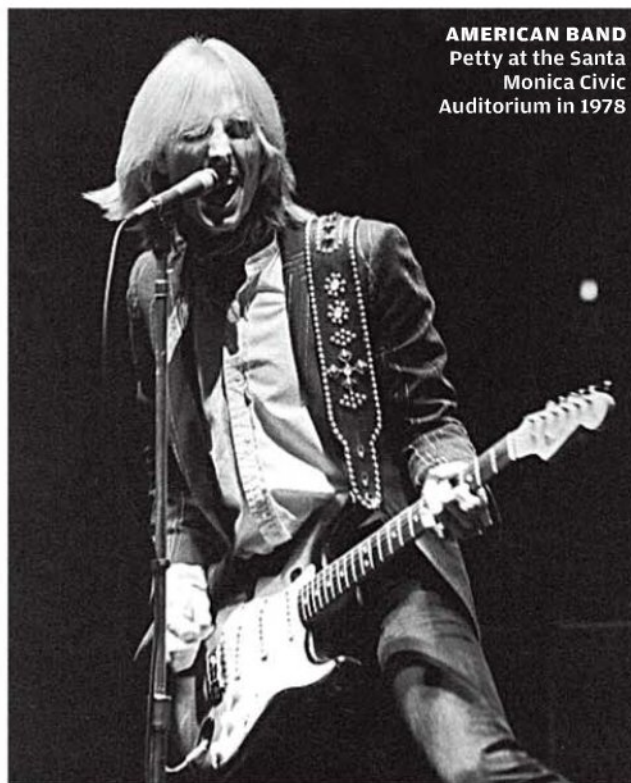
PREVIEW

"This is a song I wrote in 1976," Petty announces. "Never recorded this song." Then another voice pipes up: "That's not true. It was never recorded well!"

"That's Stan Lynch," Petty says now with a grainy chuckle, referring to the Heartbreakers' original drummer. "He always did that onstage, commenting on things back there." In fact, Lynch was right. "Surrender" was a frequent opening number in Petty's shows during the Seventies. But when that 1983 performance came up as a possibility for *The Live Anthology*, he nearly nixed it. "I said, 'That can't be a good take,' because we tried it on every album, and we could never get it right. But we played it good that night."

Compiled by Petty and guitarist Mike Campbell with engineer Ryan Ulyate from three decades of gigs, the box set is peppered with surprises – stage versions of obscure and unreleased originals; blues, garage-rock and psychedelic covers; unusual arrangements of Petty's best-known songs – amid classic hits such as "Breakdown," "Jammin' Me" and "Refugee." And Petty made sure there was room for it all. Scheduled for release in early November, *The Live Anthology* comes in a four-CD box, priced under \$25, and in a deluxe package that costs about \$100 and has a fifth CD of additional tracks as well as bonus DVDs, a vinyl EP of 1976 club-date cuts and a Blu-ray disc packed with every track in super-high fidelity and 5.1 mixes.

"I put very little video on the Blu-ray, just the credits," Petty



AMERICAN BAND
Petty at the Santa
Monica Civic
Auditorium in 1978

Best of the Box

Petty on five tracks that trace the evolution of his career

"Even the Losers"

3/6/80, Hammersmith Odeon, London

One of the earliest tracks in the set, this is the Heartbreakers in their young guitar-slinger prime, already big at home and poised for world domination.

"Something in the Air"

11/4/93, O'Connell Center, Gainesville, Florida

Thunderclap Newman's 1969 hit, given a loving psychedelic glaze. "I was struck by how well we sang it. It's me and Howie Epstein singing lead in unison. The harmonies are cool."

"Friend of the Devil"

2/3/97, the Fillmore, San Francisco

The Grateful Dead classic, covered on hallowed turf. The Heartbreakers learned it that afternoon – "It was Mike Camp-

bell's idea" – and debuted it that night. "You'll notice people are soloing all over each other."

"Mystic Eyes"

10/27/06, Greek Theatre, Berkeley, California

A nine-minute freakout on the 1965 pneumatic-blues rave-up by Van Morrison's Them. "We leave a lot of room to improvise in the shows. 'Mystic Eyes' is a great example of that."

"I Won't Back Down"

11/15/07, American Museum of Natural History, New York

A rare acoustic take on Petty's 1989 solo hit from a very weird night. "It was a benefit. People were more interested in their salads. The show was terrible except for this, the last thing we played. Later, Tom Brokaw took me aside and said, 'Great show.' I was like, 'Oh, God.'"

says, "because I intentionally didn't want people looking at anything while listening." But he admits he got the idea for the Blu-ray component from Neil Young's use of the technology on his *Archives Vol. 1*. "That came out near the end of our mixing, and I thought it was

worth exploring, because the sound quality is incredible."

"Tom thought a one- or two-CD live album doesn't say much," says Petty's manager, Tony Dimitriadis, explaining *The Live Anthology's* two generous editions. "His concern was, 'This is a life's worth of

work.'" Petty had another. "No overdubbing or tricking it out as people often do," he says. "I wanted it to be the real thing."

That meant listening to as many as 40 versions of "American Girl" to find the top take. But in the process, Petty says, "we were really surprised by things we didn't expect" – like "I Want You Back Again," a Zombies cover from Petty's 20-show residency at the Fillmore in San Francisco in 1997. "It was a single I heard in 1965," he says of the song, "and it stuck in my head forever. But I don't think we played it more than a few times."

Ulyate began going through Petty's live archive a year ago, ultimately creating an iTunes library of 170 concerts – 3,509 performances of around 400 different tunes. "I made sure Tom and Mike heard every song they ever did," Ulyate says. "And I ranked the concerts with a star system." Among the years and cities prominently featured on *The Live Anthology* are the Fillmore run, a three-night stand at the Forum in Los Angeles in 1981 and two shows in Petty's hometown of Gainesville, Florida, in 1993 and 2006.

The Live Anthology is only Petty's second official concert release. He dismisses the first, the 1985 double LP *Pack Up the Plantation* – "It was just a tour souvenir" – and live albums in general. Most, he says, "are just the greatest hits faster." Yet from the beginning, Petty documented his band's evolution onstage, recording Heartbreakers shows starting in the late Seventies, despite the technical hassles. "It was a lot more trouble then to record live," he says. "You had to have trucks and do long soundchecks and hope everything got recorded. A lot of times, stuff got recorded and just put on the shelf without me ever listening to it."

"But I'm glad we did it," Petty continues. "I think this is one of the great live rock & roll bands. And you really understand us once you've heard this set. You understand where we came from, what we were trying to do and how much we love what we do." D

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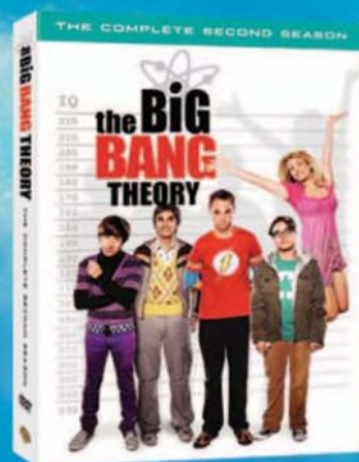
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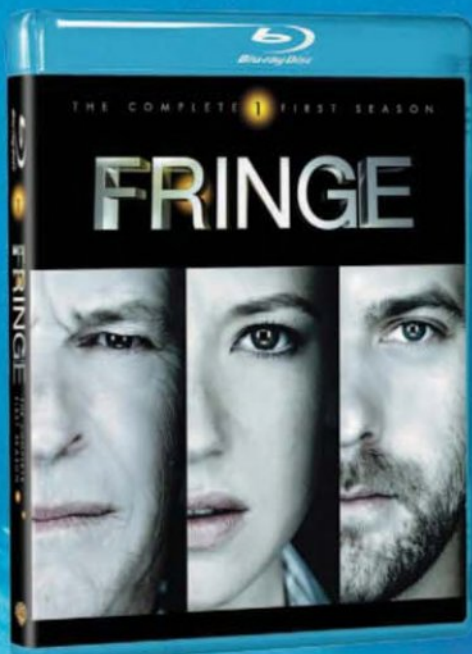
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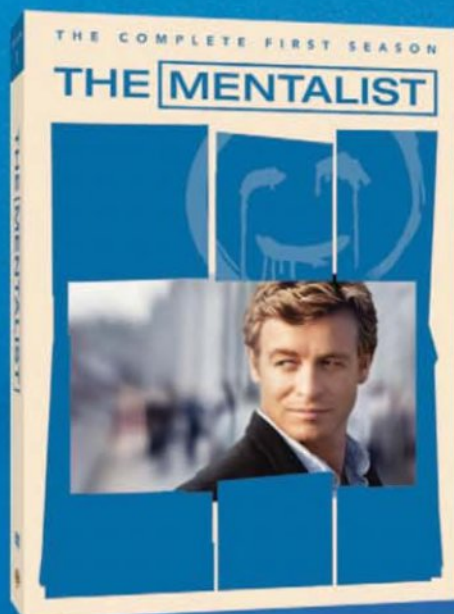
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David Crosby: Back to the Garden

The CSN singer on the trio's new covers LP and battling with the Byrds
By David Browne

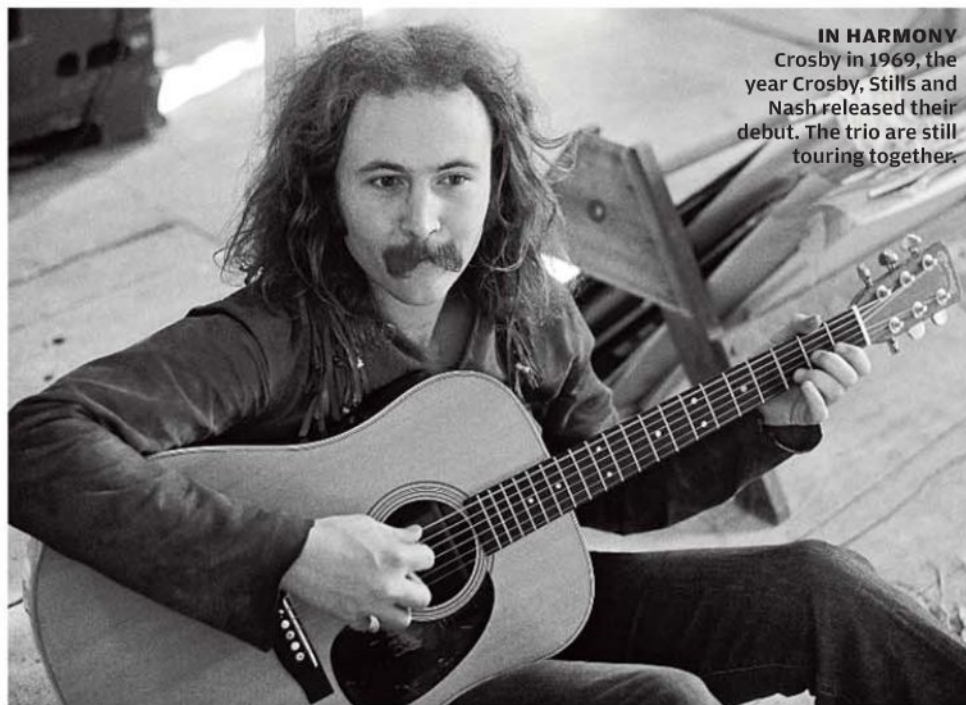
FORTY YEARS AFTER THE release of Crosby, Stills and Nash's debut, David Crosby is still on the road – with Graham Nash and Stephen Stills. Given the trio's tumultuous history, could Crosby have ever imagined that? “No, absolutely not,” says the 68-year-old singer on a day off before a CSN show in Virginia. “If you'd asked me then, I would have said no. But I was quite a different guy then.” Having been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame twice – first in 1991 as a member of the Byrds, then in 1997 with CSN – Crosby is a natural fit for the Hall of Fame's 25th-anniversary concerts on October 29th and 30th at Madison Square Garden. Friends like James Taylor and Jackson Browne are expected to join CSN at the show to celebrate the mellow singer-songwriter strain of rock & roll from the early 1970s. On their current tour, CSN have been revisiting tunes from that era, some of which may end up on the covers album they're prepping with Rick Rubin. Their set lists have included the Grateful Dead's “Uncle John's Band,” the Rolling Stones' “Ruby Tuesday” and Taylor's “You Can Close Your Eyes.” “It's fun singing this stuff,” Crosby says of what will be CSN's first studio album since 1994. “We'll go back home after the tour and rest a minute. I will become the couch that burped. And then we'll start.”

The night the Byrds were inducted, in 1991, was the first night of the Gulf War. How did that affect the mood?

I have a vague memory that someone told me they started the bombing, and that word was whispered around the room. One thing I remember is that I was in a wheelchair [laughs].

From your motorcycle accident the year before?

Yeah. I hurt the whole right side of my body. I also remem-



IN HARMONY
Crosby in 1969, the year Crosby, Stills and Nash released their debut. The trio are still touring together.

“I'll tell you what's damn hard to cover: a Beatles song. They're too good.”

ber it was very awkward seeing the other guys in the Byrds. There were not a lot of warm, fuzzy feelings. Gene [Clark] and Michael [Clarke] were fine. Roger [McGuinn] doesn't like me [laughs]. And that's unfortunate, because I would love to make more music with him. He's an amazing musician and a great singer and storyteller. But everyone handled it well, and we were proud to be there.

In 1997, Crosby, Stills and Nash were inducted, but Neil Young made headlines for not showing up to be inducted with Buffalo Springfield.

That's typical. Neil, as I'm sure you know, is extremely difficult to predict. So I don't try. I gave up on that a while ago.

CSN has been around for four decades. Have the years gone by quickly?

I try not to think about it, really. I'm glad that we've been able to keep making music, that's kind of a miracle, but I try really

hard not to think about how old and creepy I am.

You were scheduled to play around 70 concerts this summer. Does the pace ever grind you down?

I love playing the music, but I get lonely being by myself in the hotel rooms, and I wish I was at home with my family. But we're lucky to have a job. There's a lot of people who don't.

How did your upcoming project with Rick Rubin come about?

Columbia called our management company and said, “Is it true that CSN are not signed?” And they said, “Yes, that is true.” And they said, “Well, we're very interested in that.” They had an idea for an album that they really wanted to see happen.

You've already started working on it, right?

We worked at Rick's studio in Malibu. But I don't think we've gotten anything I would keep. We make lists of songs, then

25th-Anniversary Q&A

With the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame gearing up for its 25th-birthday blowout in October, ROLLING STONE is checking in with the all-star shows' headliners. This is the second in the series.

we pick ones we feel we can do well, and then we spend some time learning them. Then we make an arrangement and sing 'em to Rick. And he picks the ones he likes. And then we make another list.

Sounds like the album could take a while to finish.

Uh, yes. I can tell you what's very damn hard to try: a Beatles song. You wrap yourself around one of their songs and make an arrangement and try to do it. And then you go and listen to the Beatles' record of it and go, “Ah . . . no.” It's too amazingly good.

Where do you keep your Hall of Fame trophies?

Oh, probably in a box in the garage. My dad, who was a cinematographer, taught me a lesson about taking that stuff too seriously a long time ago. He had an Oscar, one of the first ones they gave out. He used it as a doorstop.

Is there anyone who isn't in the Hall of Fame who should be?

Well, there are quite a few people who think the Hollies [Nash's former band] should be in there. They had more hits than the Springfield and the Byrds put together. I think it's because they're too “pop.” But then, so was Mikey Jackson. 🗨

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WORLD MUSIC
Higgins, Kearney,
Ericson Stakee, Wolfers
and Beede (from left)

Stoner-Rock Revivalists Battle Brooklyn Hipsters

Alberta Cross fuse Nineties noise,
hippie-folk vibe; hate on poseurs

By Mark Kemp

GROWING UP NEAR STOCKHOLM, guitarist Petter Ericson Stakee would travel the Swedish countryside with his musician dad – he’s a well-regarded blues guitarist – listening to old Neil Young and Grateful Dead albums. When he moved to the U.K. in his teens and met his future Alberta Cross bandmate, bassist Terry Wolfers, in an East London bar, the two bonded over a very different vibe: booze, My Bloody Valentine and the obscure Southern soul singer James Carr.

“I was friends with the people who ran the bar, and we’d go there to get free drinks,” says Ericson Stakee. “We just sort of clicked right away – the music we liked and things we liked to do.”

One of the things they liked to do was combine Nineties-style guitar dissonance with the laid-back hippie folk rock of 1970s Los Angeles. On their first full-length album, *Broken Side of Time*, Alberta Cross – the band claims the name is an anagram but won’t say for what – harness both extremes, combining wind tunnels of bent guitar riffs and distorted power chords with the haunting melodies of rural American music. It’s all topped by Ericson Stakee’s sweet, high-lonesome voice, which recalls both Jim James and Neil Young.

“When we were recording in Austin, I was listening to a lot of Sonic Youth, Depeche Mode and Nick Cave,” says the 28-year-old, whose stylish beard, mop of dark hair and taste for hats and vests give him the look of a young Mick Fleetwood or Graham Nash.

Before going into the studio, Alberta Cross – Ericson Stakee and Wolfers, along with lead guitarist Sam Kearney, keyboardist Alec Higgins and drummer Austin Beede – holed up at Dave Matthews’ Haunted Hollow studio on 140 acres outside Charlottesville, Virginia, to rehearse the material. “We were in the middle of the forest, just drinking wine and smoking weed and jamming for, like, 10 hours a day,” says Ericson Stakee. It was the perfect environment for working on songs like the creepy slow-burner “Rise From the Shadows,” the shimmering big-sky rocker “Taking Control” and the acoustic beauty “Ghost of City Life,” with its eerie pedal steel guitar, piano and pleading lyrics: “How about believing, how about some faith...? How about some truth?”

Ericson Stakee wrote that song about the hipsters who spook the band’s new home of Brooklyn (the band members moved from London in 2007). “You know who I’m talking about – the people you meet in the city, the scenesters and all,” he says. “I was just sick of the city, tired of all the fake people.”

Since then, they have done their best to avoid urban poseurs – splitting for Charlottesville and then Austin, where they recorded with Spoon producer Mike McCarthy. After that, they hit the road, playing the summer festival circuit from Bonnaroo and Coachella to London’s Hard Rock Calling. Now, Wolfers says, he could see relocating once again – this time to Austin.

“I fell in love with the place,” he says. “Everybody welcomed us with open arms: ‘Come on, let me buy you a drink, there’s a party later.’” Adds Ericson Stakee, “I OD’d on Mexican food.”

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Kid Cudi: Hip-Hop's Sensitive Soul

Kanye West protégé deals with nightmares, anxiety on moody debut
By Christian Hoard

HOW SENSITIVE IS KID Cudi? Sensitive enough to have an emo moment over a plate of french fries. He's eating in a swank New York steakhouse one Friday, wearing dark jeans, vintage Air Jordans, a Bathing Ape T-shirt and large thick-frame glasses, when he zones out and just stares down at his plate. "We're sitting in this really nice restaurant," says the 25-year-old singer-rapper somberly, "and I just wasted a whole plate of fries, when some kid in Africa would love to have maybe, like, five of them."

This kind of thing happens a lot. Though he's often a chatterbox, Cudi (born Scott Ramon Seguro Mescudi) can turn quiet at a moment's notice, and he can get bummed out over anything from spending too much time away from home to thinking about the death of his father, who passed away from cancer when Cudi was 11. "I get sad at the oddest of times," he says. "I need to see a shrink."

Cudi channels the dark stuff floating around his head on his ambitious first studio album, *Man on the Moon: The End of Day*, an autobiographical song cycle divided into five acts. Beats are provided by MGMT, Cudi's mentor Kanye West, Ratahat and others, and Cudi raps about anxiety and his recurring nightmares—since the fourth grade, he's been dreaming of his own death, usually by bus or car accident (the dreams got particularly intense after his dad died). There are bright tracks, including the megacatchy, Lady Gaga-sampling rap hit "Make Her Say" and the trippy disco anthem "Enter Galactic (Love Connection Part 1)," inspired by the time Cudi and a girl ate shrooms and listened to the Postal Service. (They didn't hook up: "There was not time to have sex, though, 'cause I was so into tripping balls!")

Man on the Moon is one of the moodiest, weirdest major-label hip-hop albums ever released. "We had to add some



KANYE'S KID Best known for his spacey Top Five hit "Day 'N' Nite," Cudi also co-wrote four tracks on Kanye West's *808s & Heartbreak*. "His writing is so pure and natural," West says.

more energetic songs," says Cudi, "so that people don't feel like they're listening to a slit-your-wrists album."

Cudi is shaping up to be the first big post-Kanye MC, someone who shares some of his mentor's artsy hipness, oddball charm and tendency toward introspection, and who epitomizes the sea change in hip-hop toward more vulnerable characters. Cudi is a guy

"I get sad at the oddest of times," says Cudi. "I need to see a shrink."

who loves My Chemical Romance, alien movies and Andy Kaufman (who partly inspired the title of the album). He's also an avid social networker who writes long, painfully indulgent blog entries that blend emotional confessions with West-ian self-aggrandizement, such as: "I represent everything that is good and decent in the world, I am the voice of a whole new generation of young people who want to be just who they are."


The son of a Mexican-Native American father and a black

mother, Cudi grew up in low-income housing in Shaker Heights, a diverse and mostly wealthy suburb of Cleveland. When his father—a house painter, substitute teacher and "badass" member of the Air Force who served in World War II—died, Cudi was devastated. His extreme sensitivity kicked in around that time. He began to insist on sleeping next to his mother. "She'd get so pissed when I did it," he says. "But I'd be like, 'I can't sleep!'"

Cudi was an angry and reckless teen, getting expelled from high school for threatening to punch his principal. By then he'd begun rhyming, inspired by groups like the Pharcyde and A Tribe Called Quest. After a year of college at the University of Toledo, Cudi moved to New York in 2004. A copy of his mixtape *A Kid Named Cudi* made its way to West, who particularly loved the spacey stoner dub of "Day 'N' Nite," which became a Top Five pop hit.

West rang up Cudi on his cellphone, and the stunned rapper was soon flying to Hawaii to work on West's *808s & Heartbreak* album. Collaborating elbow to elbow with his hero, while inspirational films like

Close Encounters of the Third Kind played silently on a studio television, Cudi ended up co-writing four songs on the album, and West credits him with helping invent the album's brooding, stark sound. "His writing is just so pure and natural and important," West said to *ROLLING STONE* earlier this year. "[That's] more important than where things chart."

Cudi says that *Man on the Moon* wouldn't exist on a major label without the success of a left-of-center hit like *808s*, and like his mentor, he has grand ambitions: Cudi wants his first three albums to form a trilogy; he says volume two in the *Man on the Moon* series will be called *The Ghost and the Machine*. For the time being, however, Cudi is just trying to stay grounded. His mother, a former middle-school choir teacher who texts him constantly, helps a lot. During dinner, Cudi grabs his iPhone and reads a few of her messages aloud: "I saw you on the Teen Choice Awards show. . . . I am feeling concerned. Just a mother's instinct." Cudi reads another and smiles: "Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." 

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The Killers' frontman on Madonna, Memphis' best ribs and 'Pretty in Pink'

By Austin Scaggs

WE KIND OF NAILED it," says singer Brandon Flowers about the Killers' balls-to-the-wall, festival-closing set at Lollapalooza. "It wasn't just the size of the crowd – the response was shocking for us. It was one of the biggest moments we've ever had." The Killers are spending the rest of the summer hitting arenas and amphitheaters around the U.S. "We feed off the crowd's energy, so I hope Lollapalooza is a sign of what's to come." Flowers and his better half, Tana, welcomed their second son, Gunnar, on July 28th, and we check in with Dad on a rare day off at home in Las Vegas. "I'm driving to Caesars Palace right now," he says from behind the wheel of his '59 Corvette. "I like to play some roulette and blackjack, and take my wife to dinner – keep the economy going."

How is "Day & Age" living with you?

It sits well with our other two albums. It's obviously a little more on the pop end of things; it's not quite as masculine as *Sam's Town*, but I like it. "Spaceman" is such a playful tune, it makes my body do things that I've never done before. "Human" is one of our best recordings so far. I don't think we've made our best album yet, and that makes me happy, to know it's still out there.

What's your least-favorite Killers song?

When I hear "Glamorous Indie Rock & Roll" I want to crawl under a rock.

What's your favorite U.S. city to hit on tour?

We really come alive in Nashville and Memphis. I love the history there. I've gone to Sun Studio and Graceland twice.



ROCK & ROLL SOLDIER
Flowers and Co. are now hitting U.S. arenas

Brandon Flowers

"If you're an actor, you have no business making an album, no matter how good you sound in the shower."

I'm a big Johnny Cash fan, so it was cool to go to those places and imagine those guys walking around. And we love the food. In Memphis, I get the dry-rub ribs at Rendezvous.

"Day & Age" producer Stuart Price compared you to Madonna, saying that you two shared a similar drive and determination to succeed. In your case, where does that come from?

I've never had anything very traumatic happen to me, like Madonna [losing her mother], so I can't say anything like that. I don't know exactly where it comes from, but I have a hunger. I thought everybody liked music the way I did, but I realized I was different when I was 17. I got jealous when I heard a New Order album. That was the turning point when I start-

ed really pursuing music. When I get inspired by something, I get the chills, whether it's T. Rex or Bruce Springsteen. There's a demon inside me that wants to do something that good.

Who are you currently jealous of?

Fleetwood Mac. I've been listening to *Rumours* and some of the Eighties stuff. Some people are strictly Seventies Mac fans, but they really kept it going.

The rumor is that the Killers will release an album of covers. How's that going?

It's a dream right now. People are running with that idea a little prematurely. We've done one thing so far: We collaborated with the guys in Louis XIV on [Murray Head's] "One Night in Bangkok." So we have that. Now we need 11 more songs.

On Rufus Wainwright's last album, he wrote a song about you called "Tulsa." The lyrics say you "taste of potato chips in the morning." What's up with that?

Wishful thinking. I don't know why, in his imagination, he'd pick potato chips. We were both playing the same night in Tulsa, and after our shows we ended up in the same bar. We hung out for an hour and a half, tops, and I'm so impressed with how he turned that into a song. He does compare me to Marlon Brando in there. I'll take that all day.

Would you ever try acting?

You must get offers.

I have to say, I get annoyed with people that leapfrog around like that. It's like taking advantage of a situation that you've been given. If I were an actor, I'd be pissed if I saw a musician trying to act. And if you're an actor, you have no business making an album, no matter how good you sound when you sing in the shower.

Do you have a favorite musical moment from a John Hughes film?

I wouldn't be in music without *Pretty in Pink*. Echo and the Bunnymen's "Bring on the Dancing Horses," the Smiths' "Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want," New Order's "Shellshock," and the movie itself – it really shaped me.

Where exactly were you when you came up with the line "I got soul, but I'm not a soldier"?

I can specifically remember being in Ronnie's [Vannucci] garage when I wrote that. I don't know why I wrote it, but I know I'd been listening to a lot of U2's *Joshua Tree* and *All That You Can't Leave Behind*. Some people act like that line is nonsense, and I just don't understand that. If you listen to the song, it makes perfect sense. Our fans get it.

Do you and your bandmates have any special or bizarre talents?

Ronnie's a fucking cowboy. He'll go camping on horseback, Wild West style, and I'm very envious. Mark [Stormer] has a black belt in tae kwon do. And Dave [Keuning] speaks Klingon – I'm not kidding. Me? I've got nothing on them.

Ellie Greenwich, Brill Building Legend

Girl-group songwriter penned 'Be My Baby,' dozens more classic hits
By David Browne

ELLIE GREENWICH, whose aching, ebullient songs defined the girl-group sound of the early 1960s, died of a heart attack in New York on August 26th. She was 68. Working with then-husband Jeff Barry, Phil Spector and others, Greenwich co-wrote an astonishing run of hits: "Be My Baby" and "Baby, I Love You" for the Ronettes; "Then He Kissed Me" and "Da Doo Ron Ron" (the Crystals); "River Deep - Mountain High" (Ike and Tina Turner); and "Leader of the Pack" (the Shangri-Las). "'Be My Baby' has so much resonance," says longtime friend Paul Shaffer. "It's just the simplest statement of love you can get. And you can't get any more joyous than songs like 'River Deep - Mountain High' or 'Hanky Panky.' They're just so up and positive. That's the way she was: a totally positive force."

Working with Neil Diamond on early hits like "Cherry Cherry," Greenwich became one of rock's first female record producers. Greenwich, who was born in Brooklyn and raised on Long Island, formed a girl group (the Jivettes) while in



Greenwich recording in New York in 1964 - the year she and then-husband Jeff Barry wrote 17 hit singles.

high school. In 1959, she ran into Barry, a childhood friend and burgeoning songwriter. They began cutting demos together, and in 1962 Greenwich was hired for \$100 a week as a staff writer at Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller's Trio Music. "Those were the days when teenage songs were written by teenagers," says fellow Brill Building songwriter Neil Sedaka. "It was very real, very honest, a little naive, but the words and the sentiment were there."

Adds Ronnie Spector, "At the time, women weren't considered artists. We were like lit-

tle Stepford sisters. But Ellie will go down as one of the first women in rock as far as writing and producing."

Among the duo's other hits were "Chapel of Love" (the Dixie Cups) and "Do Wah Diddy Diddy" (Manfred Mann), which both went to Number One in 1964. "She had a great ability to write simple, which is not easy," says Stoller. "You can hear it in 'Be My Baby' and 'Chapel of Love.' She had the gift to make something simple that's indelible."

By 1965, Diamond, then a struggling young songwriter,

had met Greenwich and Barry - and the pair helped launch Diamond's career, producing and arranging "Cherry Cherry," "Kentucky Woman," "Solitary Man," "Shilo" and other early hits. "She was one of the best background singers ever," remembers Diamond. "The 'Cherry Cherry' background parts - 'She got the way to move me' - were not part of the song I wrote. She and Jeff came up with it, and there it was; it became a very important part of the record. They had so much fun producing the records that it was contagious."

Greenwich and Barry split soon after working with Diamond, around when the Brill Building era of pop gave way to bands like the Beatles, who wrote their own material. In later years, Greenwich wrote with fans like Cyndi Lauper and Nona Hendryx, and took on jingle work. But her classics lived on in *Leader of the Pack*, a 1980s Broadway musical based on her music. "They were amazing songs, all of them - it's an unbelievable repertoire," says Diamond. "Her work will be around forever. Few songwriters that have ever lived had something that measured up to that." **CB**

Additional reporting by Andy Greene

Jim Dickinson, 'Wild Horses' Pianist

By Mark Kemp

JIM DICKINSON, A MAVERICK Southern producer and musician who worked with artists ranging from the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and Aretha Franklin to Big Star and the Replacements, died at 67 on August 15th in Memphis, recuperating from heart surgery.

"Jim had a real understanding of what it means to take music by hillbillies and bluesmen and create something that wasn't just replicating it," says Ry Cooder, whom Dickinson collaborated with on numerous albums, including the 1984 soundtrack to *Paris, Texas*.

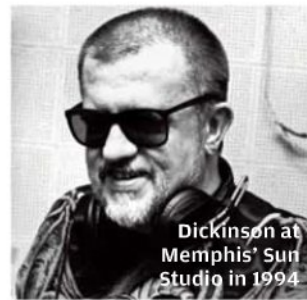
It was Dickinson who persuaded the Stones to record 1971's *Sticky Fingers* in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Dickinson was invited to the session by the writer Stanley Booth, who was covering the Stones' tour. When the Stones' keyboardist, Ian Stewart, left the session because he didn't like to play minor chords, Dickinson cut the piano on "Wild Horses." "[That] literally gave me a career," he recalled in 2007.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Dickinson grew up in Memphis. He learned boogie-woogie piano from a groundskeeper his family employed. After attending college briefly

in Texas, he returned to Memphis and fell into the blues-and-folk revival scene. His wife encouraged him to pursue a full-time music career.

After cutting "Wild Horses," Dickinson formed the Dixie Flyers, which became the house band for Atlantic Records in Miami, backing Aretha Franklin and Sam and Dave, among others. He returned to Memphis after the group split, and in 1974 he produced Big Star's *Third/Sister Lovers*.

In the Eighties and Nineties, Dickinson connected with a new generation of artists: He produced the Replacements' 1987 record *Pleased to Meet Me*



Dickinson at Memphis' Sun Studio in 1994

and later worked with Mudhoney and Primal Scream.

In recent years, Dickinson regularly recorded and performed with his sons, Cody and Luther, who formed the North Mississippi Allstars in 1996. "He was never heavy-handed," says Cody. "He just passed on the information and said, 'Go do it.'" **CB**



Yo hey, I'm Paul, the original Dollar Menuaire. I'll admit it. I'm kind of a risk taker. Last week,



I threw in this red t-shirt with a load of whites. A sock came out pink, but no pain, no gain. So I like a safe bet sometimes to, ya know, keep my balance. As luck would have it, there's the Dollar Menu. It's pretty much loaded with **choice choices**. There's no wrong answer in the whole bunch. So it keeps my yin balanced with my yang. So to speak.

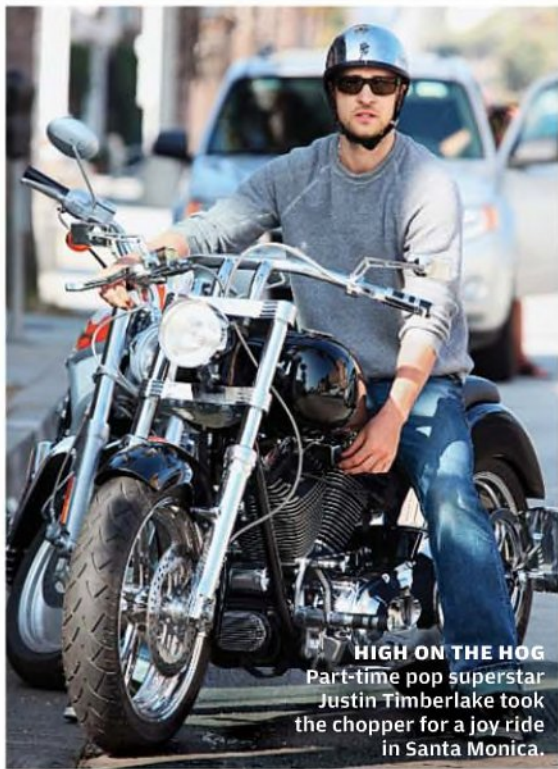
Dollar M Menu

i'm lovin' it.

At participating McDonald's. ©2008 McDonald's

"We got to get rid of Arnold Schwarzenegger! We're bankrupt!"—Billie Joe Armstrong, onstage in L.A.

Random Notes



HIGH ON THE HOG
Part-time pop superstar Justin Timberlake took the chopper for a joy ride in Santa Monica.



KING OF THE APES
The Flaming Lips' bag o' tricks includes laser pointers, giant inflatable balls, confetti canons and now . . . a giant gorilla. At Colorado's Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Wayne Coyne mounted the primate while debuting cuts from their upcoming disc, *Embryonic*.



KOSHER FACE Lady Gaga had to leave her usual cyborg-stripper gear at home while visiting Jerusalem. She prayed at the Western Wall, and planned a dip in the Dead Sea prior to a gig in Tel Aviv.

Chili Concerto

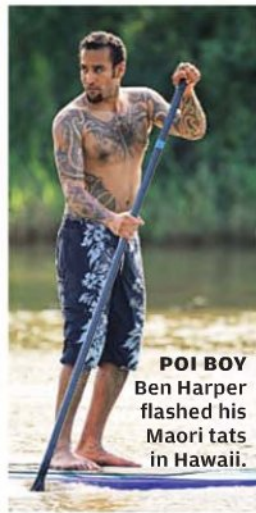
"On a scale of one to 10, it's all the way for Flea," says fellow Chili Pepper Anthony Kiedis about the bassist's love of the Silverlake Conservatory of Music. "The school makes no money, so it's definitely a labor of love." To raise dough for the school he co-founded, Flea hosted a "Rock the Bach" benefit at his home in L.A., with guests like the Police's Andy Summers, Linda Perry and Josh Groban, who sang "Ave Maria." "Josh just owned it," says Flea, who spent the past year studying music theory at USC. "He's a cool mother."





Moon Over Miami

Poolside in Miami Beach, Kanye West was a sideshow act, as his on-again fembot Amber Rose stunned sunbakers with her bodaciously bubbling bootay.



POI BOY
Ben Harper flashed his Maori tats in Hawaii.



RIBS FOR HER PLEASURE
Here's what keeps Ric Ocasek's motor running. The Cars singer celebrated 20 years with supermodel wifey Paulina Porizkova in St. Barths.



DIVA DOES GOOD
Pop humanitarian Annie Lennox shared the bill with members of the African Children's Choir at the unveiling of a Nelson Mandela memorial in Scotland.

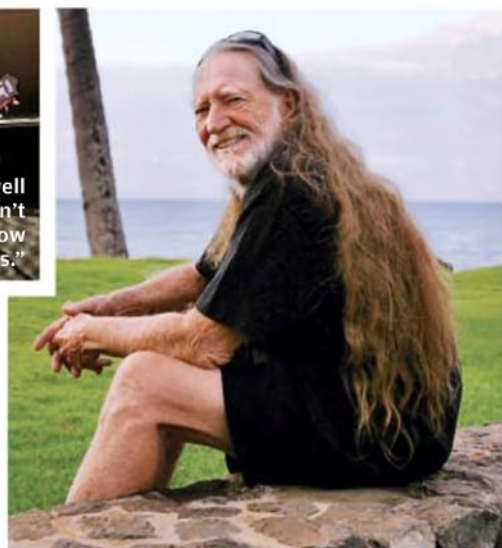
YACHT ROCKS
Mick Jagger lives la dolce vita on a schmancy boat in Italy.



Nelson and Bridwell sang "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys."

Aloha, Willie

"We've done some cool stuff, but this one takes the cake," says Band of Horses' Ben Bridwell, who shared a bill with Willie Nelson at a supersecret gig at Charley's bar in Maui. "Only the real master can do it as long as he has. And to this day, when he sings, time stands still."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARYKONLINE.COM; SPLASH NEWS; TRIB/FAME PICTURES; MARTINA SALVI/REX USA; EMILY SHUIR; 2: FCS/FAME PICTURES

Can you believe they're all related? Neither can they.



modern family



COMEDY
wednesday

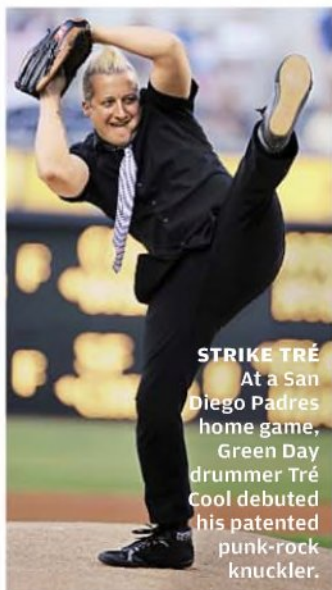
premieres september 23rd 9/8c

Watch an extended preview at abc.com/ModernFamily



King of the Hill

Taking the mound to the sounds of "Wild Thing," Kings of Leon drummer Nathan Followill recently threw out the first pitch at a Dodgers game. "Playing for 100,000 kids is nothing compared to throwing a ball 60 feet," he said.



STRIKE TRÉ
At a San Diego Padres home game, Green Day drummer Tré Cool debuted his patented punk-rock knuckler.



DAMN YANKEE Avril Lavigne, the poet laureate of mall punks and bratty tweens everywhere, sat front row at Yankee Stadium.



A HARD DAY'S NIGHT GAME
Three amigos Jack Nicholson, Lorne Michaels and Paul McCartney (with gal Nancy Shevell) cheered the Bronx Bombers.



SHARP-DRESSED MEN Since the Aerosmith tour has been canceled, ZZ Top - who were the opening act - have booked their own trek through the U.S. In L.A., the boogie kings were joined by John Mayer and Slash for noodleastic versions of "La Grange" and "Tush."



"I want a recurring role," says Moore, with Crawford (left) and Westwick. "I'll be the 51-year-old ex-indie-rocker."

Sonic Youth: Gossip Groupies

"Kim and I are fanatical viewers of *Gossip Girl*," says Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, speaking on behalf of his wife and bandmate, Kim Gordon. "It's like our weekly dose of Shakespeare." The alt-rock guru and his group visited the set to tape a performance of their classic "Star Power" - they'll play a wedding band in a future episode. Afterward, Moore kicked it with GG stars Chace Crawford and Ed Westwick. "Ed's character has my favorite lines," Moore says. "Like, 'I do my cardio in the evening.'"


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JUAN OCAMPO/L.A. DODGERS; SCOTT WACHTER/CON SM/RETNA; WENZELBERG/SPLASH NEWS; ANTHONY J. CAUSI/SPLASH NEWS; COCO HAYLEY GORDON; MOORE; GENE KIRKLAND

A photograph of Usher in a recording studio. He is wearing a white dress shirt, a dark vest, and dark trousers. He is smiling and looking towards the right. A professional microphone on a boom stand is positioned in front of him. To his left is a grand piano. To his right is a music stand with sheet music and a pair of headphones. The background is a dark, textured wall.

got milk?

Let it flow.

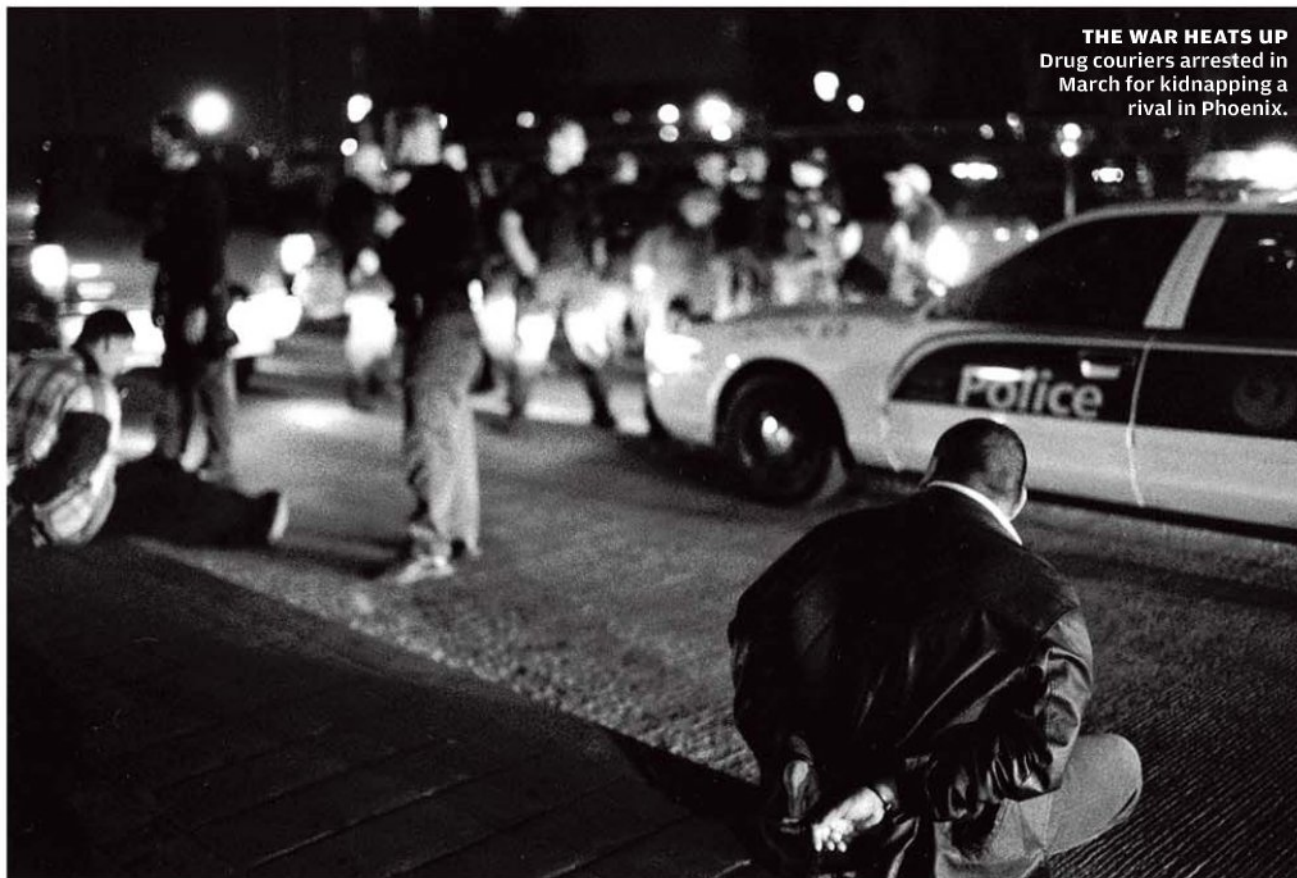
I pour my heart into my music. How do I stay in tune? With milk.
The protein and nutrients in lowfat milk help me build muscle and stay fit.
So eat right, exercise and grab a glass of ice-cold milk. Now that's chill.

body  milk.

www.bodybymilk.com

USHER ©2009 AMERICA'S MILK PROCESSORS

THE WAR HEATS UP
Drug couriers arrested in March for kidnapping a rival in Phoenix.



How the Cartels Work

Mexican drug lords have transformed the narcotics trade in America – and the DEA appears powerless to stop them

★ *By Guy Lawson* ★

ONE OF THE STRANGEST things about the drug war that is tearing Mexico apart is how little of the bloodshed has spilled over the border. On one side of the Rio Grande is Ciudad Juárez, one of the most violent cities on the planet, with 1,600 drug-related murders last year. On the other side is El Paso, Texas, the third-safest city in America, with only 18 killings. The 100-to-1 disparity in murders underscores a little-understood reality in the War on Drugs: The current crop of Mexican drug lords is not a bunch of *Scarface*-style lunatics high on coke and hellbent on violence. Instead, they are highly sophisticated executives, pursuing profit by the cheapest and most efficient means possible.

Torturing rivals and beheading victims serves a purpose in Mexico, where drug-related violence has killed 12,000 people in the past three years; *narcotraficantes* routinely use brutality to subdue competitors,

eliminate witnesses and frighten off police recruits. But north of the border, the drug lords are as corporate and hyperorganized as Walmart, replacing the top-down approach of their Colombian predecessors with a new business model – one that outsources the street-level grunt work to an army of illegal immigrants. With business booming – prices are steady and demand remains high – unleashing a Mexican-style rampage in this country would only risk riling up U.S. law enforcement. The Mexican cartels aren't fighting the War on Drugs in the United States for a very simple reason: They've already won.

AS THE VIOLENCE IN MEXICO has escalated, federal officials have stepped up major busts against the cartels in the U.S. Earlier this year, in Operation Xcellerator, the Drug Enforcement Administration made 750 arrests from Califor-

nia to Maryland, seizing \$59 million in cash and 23 tons of narcotics – including 12,000 kilos of coke, 1,200 pounds of meth and 1.3 million hits of Ecstasy. The operations employ the same law-enforcement tactics used to disrupt the Mafia in the 1980s, busting low-level flunkies and turning them into informants. So far, though, the DEA's widely publicized campaign has been a total bust when it comes to nailing top *narcos*. The target of Operation Xcellerator – a drug lord from the Sinaloa cartels – remains a fugitive, as do four Mexican drug traffickers designated as “narcotics kingpins” in July. According to the DEA, the men operate out of Mexico, overseeing a sophisticated organization in the U.S. that sets prices, tracks shipments, manages employment and handles payoffs. The group has divided the border into “plazas,” each under the control of a specific manager. The name of the outfit, appropriately enough, is the Company.

IAN MARTIN/REDFUX

The failure of the DEA raids underscores the fundamental difference between Italian-American mobsters in Brooklyn and the much more brutal and ruthless Mexicans. The supposed Mafia "code of silence," called *omertà*, proved to be little more than a joke as hundreds of wiseguys flipped to save their own skins, generating a steady stream of convictions. But the Mexicans have more than a fictional code of conduct: They have hostages. Every low-level *narco* busted in the U.S. has family and friends back in Mexico who, they know, will be killed by the cartels if they cooperate with the gringos. Senior DEA agents acknowledge privately that they have yet to flip a single significant snitch from the cartels. The matrix of punishments and incentives that destroyed the Mafia – racketeering laws, witness-protection programs, supermax prisons – have little relevance to the Mexican drug lords, who are essentially holding an entire nation at gunpoint.

"Mexicans don't flip," says an undercover DEA agent who participated in Operation Pocono Powder, a major case against the cartels in New York. "Part of the way the cartels retain control is through fear. Mexicans will cooperate to a certain level, but they won't talk about Sinaloa. They know their family back home will be killed."

The DEA insists that its high-profile busts are having an effect. "In Project Reckoning, we had 64 cities involved," says Carl Pike of the DEA's Special Operations Division, citing a bust against the Gulf cartels that resulted in 507 arrests by last year. "We were after their distribution capability. It was like taking out 64 Walmarts all at once. The Mexicans have to regroup from ground zero, and it's time-consuming and expensive to do that."

But the Walmart analogy offers a larger insight into how the Mexican cartels have transformed the drug business in America – and why the DEA has been unable to stop them. In the 1980s, the Colombians tried to directly control the distribution of their product through a network of low-level dealers – a group prone to stealing, fucking up, getting caught or trying to take over themselves. Like any good manager, however, the Mexicans learned from the mistakes of their predecessors. Instead of maintaining their own labor force of dealers – a risky and costly proposition at best – the drug lords came up with the same solution as Walmart and countless other multinational corporations: outsourcing.

To sell their product in America, the Mexicans contract with existing criminal operations, relying mainly on Hispanic gangs like MS-13 and the Mexican Mafia. But they also sell to Crips, Bloods, Hells Angels, Puerto Ricans or Dominicans – whoever can move weight reliably. This keeps their overhead low and reduces potentially risky connections to top management. It also makes all of the headaches

of running the business – wages, benefits, overseeing an untrained and unruly workforce – someone else's problem. "American gangs are not integrated into the Mexican drug-trafficking organizations," says Tom Diaz, a senior policy analyst at the Violence Policy Center and the author of *No Boundaries: Transnational Latino Gangs and American Law Enforcement*. "The gangs are wild cards; their behavior is unpredictable. There's no advantage to the Mexican cartels to bring them into their structure. The Mexicans are happy to sell them drugs, but they keep them at arm's length. They use them sometimes as muscle or disciplinarians, but only on a contract basis."

Street-level dealers, mostly drawn from the pool of millions of Mexican immigrants stuck in menial jobs in the U.S., effectively become what Amway calls "IBOs," or Independent Business Owners. They sell all the crank and crack they can, hoping to boost their sales status from an Amway-like Silver to Gold to Platinum, providing them with ever-larger supplies of product to move. "The low-level guys are working

Rather than resort to violence in U.S. cities, the Mexican cartels have outsourced street-level grunt work to an army of illegal immigrants.

menial jobs as they establish themselves as a drug dealer," says Greg Borland, the DEA assistant special agent in charge of Alabama. "They are the ones who are like Tony Montana in *Scarface*. They start small and try to make something of themselves."

Higher-level dealers are required to keep a low profile and live modestly, as if they were regional managers for a chain of fast-food restaurants. If one gets busted, there's rarely a link that can be traced back to the cartels – and even if there is, the dealer knows that his family back in Mexico is certain to be executed if he talks to the feds. "The structure is designed to minimize the risk by minimizing the number of sales or 'touches' that have to be made," says Borland. "The guys at the highest corporate level – the cartel guys – only make one sale. It's very low-risk."

Stripped to its essence, what the Mexican cartels sell is not drugs so much as *access* to the world's biggest and most lucrative market for drugs. And thanks to U.S. policy, the Mexicans enjoy a virtual monopoly on the American market. In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan largely closed off

the Caribbean as a passage for narcotics, forcing the Colombians to turn to the Mexicans for an overland route. In the mid-1990s, after NAFTA made it easier to ship goods of all kinds across the border, Mexicans became the go-to distributors for Afghans, South Asians, Middle Easterners and anyone else looking to sell illegal substances to Americans.

The result has been the creation of one of the most successful criminal enterprises in human history. In Sinaloa, money brought back from U.S. drug deals was long known as "dirt," because of the smell it got from being hidden in suitcases underground. But today, the cartels launder Yankee dollars through a network of global banks, using the same secure electronic transfers as any self-respecting international business. According to the government's own estimates, the Mexican cartels generate as much as \$38 billion in gross proceeds at the wholesale level every year – a sum that surpasses Dupont and Coca-Cola.

ALABAMA OFFERS AN ESPECIALLY illuminating microcosm of the way the drug cartels operate in America. The state has been cut up into territories, with no sign of the violent turf wars over markets that plague Mexico. Distribution in the north of the state is handled largely by established black drug dealers; the rural areas are increasingly handled by Mexican migrant workers looking to supplement their income from day labor. Even if the feds manage to bust a dealer, it's almost impossible to connect such a low-level flunky to a drug kingpin in Mexico. "The problem is how smart they are," says Borland. "The dealers are illegals, so they're not documented. There's no credit cards, no driver's licenses. They're ghosts. All the dealer is, is a face and a name – which is probably not his real name. One false move and he disappears into thin air."

Alabama is crisscrossed with interstate highways, making it an excellent site for transshipment. Police routinely set up roadblocks to catch narcotics on the highways, but the drug couriers have developed highly sophisticated evasion techniques. A three-car structure is used. First comes a sweeper car going 80 or 90 miles per hour, to flush out any law enforcement with a speeding violation. Next comes a station wagon laden with coke or cash, often driven by an unthreatening-looking elderly couple. Behind is a chase car, charged with crashing into the police if a pursuit begins. Even if the cops do manage to stop the car with the drugs, the courier's higher-ups know instantly that the shipment has gone off track: The drugs are embedded with GPS tracking devices.

In a recent bust called Operation Rico Suave, the DEA set up on a drug cell that was dealing coke in the affluent area of

Huntsville, Alabama. According to agents, the regional manager of the operation was a Mexican named Galdino Zamora, who oversaw a trucking operation that was secretly shipping 50 kilos of high-quality cocaine into Alabama each month from Brownsville, Texas. Unlike Mafia wise-guys, Zamora didn't even bother to erect a legitimate front operation to fool law enforcement. Instead, he just hid in plain sight, living inconspicuously in a modest home and spending his days taking care of his lawn. From the cartel's perspective, there was no reason for Zamora to hide: He had contact with only one dealer, a local coke slinger named Reco Willingham. The DEA made 33 arrests in the case – but the bust didn't make a dent in the flow of drugs. "Only three of those guys mattered to us," says Borland. "The big guys in Brownsville fled back to Mexico. They get one glimpse of us, and they're gone. We never see them again. By now there will be a new Galdino Zamora in Huntsville. We just don't know who he is. He'll have a different cover. He'll work in a taco stand."

Perhaps the biggest tool the cartels rely on is the ignorance of their opponents. In places like Alabama, few cops or federal agents speak Spanish – let alone know the code words and secret signals used by couriers. DEA agents recount horror stories of local sheriffs who stumble onto a cache of drugs and then try to run their own case, ordering the courier to get on the phone and call his contact. "Mexicans are calm, educated, trained," says Borland. "They don't shit the bed like a high school kid when they're arrested. They will agree to cooperate and give names and addresses to appear like they're furthering the investigation. But when they make a phone call, they will use code words – like 'I'm sick' – to signal that they've been busted. The con-

tact walks away from the deal instantly. If it's 10 kilos of coke, it's nothing to them."

Borland recalls asking one sheriff how he knew that a courier had said what he was ordered to say when he was forced to call his boss and set up a meeting to trade the drugs. "That's what I told him to say," replied the sheriff, who spoke no Spanish. Borland shakes his head in amazement. "I pointed out to him the fact that the courier is a criminal, and he might be lying."

The cluelessness of local law enforcement was on conspicuous display last August, when deputies in Shelby County discovered five bodies splayed on the floor of an apartment outside Birmingham. To the local cops, it looked like a classic slaying by the Mexican cartels. The five dead men had all been systematically tortured before they were killed. Jumper cables, modified to fit a household outlet, had been attached to their ears to administer electric shocks. There were traces of duct tape on their mouths and noses, bruises on their arms and wrists, and burn marks on their ears and necks. Even death hadn't been the end of their ordeal: The necks of the victims had been slashed postmortem – a signature common to narco murders in Mexico.

The press went into overdrive: CARTELS UNLEASH VIOLENCE IN REGION, reported *The Birmingham News*. DRUG CARTEL VIOLENCE SPILLS OVER FROM MEXICO, trumpeted *The New York Times*. The murders in Birmingham, asserted *Newsweek*, were "believed to be a hit ordered by Mexican narco-traffickers."

But the official line was dead wrong. Through an anonymous tip, police eventually arrested a local drug dealer named Juan Castaneda who had apparently been carjacked a few weeks earlier carrying nearly \$500,000 in cash he owed his sup-

pliers in Mexico. Castaneda had to get the money back before it was spent, or he would become the equivalent of a narco sharecropper, forced to work off the debt by selling drugs for free until the half million was repaid. (The cartels rarely kill members of their sales force, preferring to keep them working.) So Castaneda had hired a local hoodlum known as CJ to find the stickup crew responsible for the carjacking. Police say CJ and another thug named Train lured four of the victims to a meeting; the other dead man just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The jumper cables were the ones CJ used to kill his pit bulls when they became too old to fight. What made national news as evidence of the reach of the Mexican drug cartels was, it appears, a dope-dealer rip-off gone haywire.

To anyone who knows how the narcos operate, the murders looked pretty half-assed by Mexican standards. "The Mexicans don't leave scars," says Borland. "Some of those neck wounds didn't even lacerate the esophagus. Down in Mexico they decapitate people and line the heads up like they're bowling balls. If old CJ wanted to convince us that it was the Mexicans, he would have to bear down a lot harder."

But the lack of any evidence linking Mexican drug lords to the homicides did nothing to dissuade Robert Owens, the district attorney in Shelby County, from treating the murders as part of a broader conflict between rival cartels. Owens freely admits that his office is unprepared to make sense of such killings. "Our problem with dealing with cartel-level offenses is that none of us have the training, background or experience to accurately know what is going on," Owens says. "I don't know anything about drug cartels."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP IMAGES; ISTOCK PHOTO; DEESENLIK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY "ROLLING STONE"; ISTOCK PHOTO; CARLOS OSORIO/AP IMAGES; MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES; AP IMAGES; DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; NELSON ANTONIO/AP IMAGES; ISTOCK PHOTO; JOSH ROSS/ISTOCK PHOTO; SCOUT24/AN/AP IMAGES

THREAT ASSESSMENT

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SCARY

Justice Sotomayor



Obama proposes a **farmer's market** outside the White House.



Justice Department appoints special prosecutor for **CIA torture**.



Obama honors **NASCAR** at White House.



Rep. **Barney Frank** to town haller who likened Obama to the Nazis: "On what planet do you spend most of your time?"



WITH US

Obama bowls a **144**.



Mexico **legalizes** marijuana and narcotics for personal use.

Nationwide **kiss-in** sends message to anti-gay Mormon church.



Tom Ridge admits that the Bush White House **politicized** terror warnings.

Right-wing Focus on the Family **too broke** to fund conversion of homosexuals.



Obama bestows Presidential Medal of Freedom on **Harvey Milk**.



TOP: MICHAEL REYNOLDS/EPA/CORBIS; BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JEFF SWENSEN/GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK PHOTO; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; PARAMOUNT PICTURES; HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; CLAYTON HANSEN/ISTOCK PHOTO; ISTOCKPHOTO; 2. CHARLES DHARAPAK/AP IMAGES, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"



IT'S A BUST
Acting DEA chief Michele Leonhart announces a bust of 750 drug suspects.

Chris Curry, the sheriff for Shelby County, is equally blunt. "I'm in the same situation as police chiefs in little towns all across the country," says Curry, who has only two Spanish-speakers on his entire force. "We don't have the operational intelligence to know what is going on right in front of our eyes."

FOR NOW, VIOLENCE STEMMING directly from the cartels has been largely confined to U.S. towns along the Mexican border. In Phoenix, where the number of kidnappings has tripled since 2000, police have created a special unit to deal with the wave of abductions. Most of the victims are low-level couriers who are held for ransom when drug deals go bad: In Georgia, one of the newest distribution routes for Mexican drugs, a dealer was kidnapped last year in a dispute over a \$300,000 drug debt and held hostage for a week.

Federal officials, however, continue to insist that the drug lords are personally ordering assaults within the United States. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center, Mexican cartels now operate in 230 cities across the country. "Their violence is not contained at the border," declared Michele Leonhart, acting chief of the DEA. "It has reached as far as Chicago and Detroit, and even into small-town America." In March, according to the agency, the drug lord known as El Chapo traveled to the Mexican town of Sonoyta, a few miles south of the Arizona border. There, he reportedly ordered his men to "use their weapons to defend their loads at all costs" — even if it meant killing American cops. On August 20th, the Justice Department indicted El Chapo and nine other top drug lords on charges of criminal conspiracy. Leonhart accused the Mexicans of "calling the shots" in "street operations in U.S. communities like Chicago and New York."

So far, though, there's little evidence that El Chapo or his rivals want to wage war in the U.S. To do so would endanger their business — and business is good. As they say in the Sierra Madres, where El Chapo is based, *No mates la gallina de los huevos de oro*. "Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs." But if El Chapo should step up the violence, U.S. agencies are ill-prepared for the fight. In Operation Pocono Powder, for example, the DEA wasn't able to bust anyone close to the cartels. "The main guy running the deal was from Sinaloa," says the undercover agent who handled contact with the man. "He knew how to play the game. We never got a wire on him. Once the load got taken, he disappeared. The last we heard, an informant saw him back in Mexico working out at a gym with two security guys guarding him. All we got was the local guys doing the monkey work."

Although DEA officials still present the bust as an example of a "great case," it actually underscores how the cartels run rings around the agency, even on its home turf. The bust began with an informant in federal prison, who told the DEA that El Chapo was importing 1,000 kilos of coke a year into New York through a trucking company in California. The source enabled undercover agents to make contact with El Chapo's connection in California and to offer to buy 100 kilos. But the entire investigation was based on a ruse. The prison "informant," it turned out, had stolen 150 kilos from the cartels — he was simply using the DEA to take out his U.S. suppliers so he could explain the missing coke to his bosses back in Mexico.

"The guy was full of shit," says the undercover DEA agent. "He orchestrated it all. He actually fooled the Mexicans." Not to mention America's top enforcement agency in the War on Drugs.

NO GOVT HEALTHCARE

Forty-five percent of people eligible for Medicare believe "the government should stay out of Medicare."

Death panel liars

Jersey cop detains Bob Dylan for taking a walk without an ID.

Protesters bring firearms to Obama's town-hall meetings.

Rep. Michele Bachmann threatens to run for president.

AGAINST US

Surgeon General nominee serves on Burger King advisory panel.

Study finds mercury in every freshwater fish tested over seven years.

Obama fails to fill half of top administration posts.

Forbes names Exxon-Mobil "green company of the year."

GOP sleazeball Tom DeLay joins *Dancing With the Stars*.

Ocean temperatures reach record highs.

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REASONS TO WATCH TV

REASON #1

The Subversive Joy of Stephen Colbert

By Neil Strauss Photographs by Martin Schoeller

'DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS TO humanize me first before I say these terrible things?" Stephen Colbert asks the New York studio audience at the beginning of a taping of his savagely sarcastic Comedy Central talk show, *The Colbert Report*.

A tremor ripples through the audience. This is something they didn't expect to see: The man who has perfected the art of playing a conservative blowhard is about to step out of character.

An older woman asks Colbert about interviewing Paul McCartney. "When I interviewed Paul McCartney," he says, "I was so hung over from our Christmas party, which was two days before – so that shows you how hung over I was."

The audience laughs. Colbert straightens the yellow tie that cuts viciously through his black pinstriped suit.

A guy asks if he'd like to work with actress Amy Sedaris again. He says he'd love to, then adds, "She's also an excellent source of Vicodin."

The audience laughs again. Colbert is now officially humanized.

The following day, there is another opportunity to humanize Colbert as he sits in his office two floors above the soundstage for a rare interview. But the Stephen Colbert who answers these questions is neither the ironically egomaniacal character he plays on *The Colbert Report* nor the hard-partying, quip-ready average Joe he played for the question-asking studio audience the night before.

He is Ned Flanders.

Colbert is wearing a short-sleeve pink dress shirt tucked into khaki pants. When he speaks, he is earnest, gentle and well-intentioned – words one would never use to describe his onscreen persona.

He doesn't swear, preferring exclamations like "gosh," "shoot" and "boy." And time and time again, the conversation returns to a central theme: his ethics and faith as a practicing Catholic.

Colbert grew up in South Carolina, the youngest of 11 children in a traditional Irish Catholic family. Combining



SUPERPATRIOT
Colbert with his
show's mascot in
New York City

his adolescent love of science fiction and his success in school plays, he attended Northwestern University to study theater. Though he was interested in serious drama, he began taking classes at the ImprovOlympic in Chicago and eventually found a part-time job at Second City, the improv-comedy theater that spawned many cast members of *Saturday Night Live*. That was where he met Sedaris, with whom he later made the cult after-school-special parody *Strangers With Candy*.

In 1997, Colbert joined *The Daily Show*, where he honed his extreme sendup of right-wing punditry, before being given his own time slot in 2005. At first glance, Colbert's persona seemed squarely aimed at archconservatives like Bill O'Reilly. But as Colbert talks about his approach to comedy, it becomes clear that his agenda is not what it seems. It is not political, like Bill Maher. Nor is it purely comic, like Jay Leno and other stand-ups. It is an improvisatory game – one that Colbert is playing with all of us. In improv, much of the humor comes from taking a funny base concept to its most ludicrous extreme. Where other talk-show hosts interview presidents, Colbert casts them in his own skits – as he did when President Obama appeared on his recent broadcast from Iraq, ordering Gen. Ray Odierno to shave Colbert's head. To Colbert, the world is a pool of comic extras waiting for a comedy bit to happen.

Colbert sits behind his desk in an office cluttered with inspirational notes, artwork from fans and copies of his number-one-bestselling book, *I Am America (And So Can You!)*, to sign for visitors. With hair disheveled, eyes glazed and a head full of half-formed jokes and ideas, he peels away the Saran Wrap on a sandwich and proceeds to deconstruct his approach to comedy.

Do you mind if I eat while we talk?
No problem. What are you eating?

Scrambled eggs with ham, provolone and mustard on rye. We have different names for my sandwiches. This is called "the usual." Then there's "the new normal," which is the same but with no cheese. And "the classic," which is a BLT. Those are the three things that I eat, generally.

Considering how hard you work on each show, how do you balance the time with your wife and three children?

I'm not entirely successful at that. I started as an improviser at Second City and ImprovOlympic in Chicago, and that really influences the way I behave as a performer and creator. In some ways, it's been detrimental in my own life because I have trouble saying no to things. You're not supposed to say no in improv.

Contributing editor NEIL STRAUSS interviewed Jay Leno in RS 1080.

Right, there's the whole philosophy of "yes and," where you say yes to everything your partner says and then add something.

Yeah, and that can be a dangerous way to live. But we have "yes and"-ed a lot of opportunities on this show. For instance, the shows we just did in Iraq, they weren't our idea. I was asked if I wanted to do it by a guy named Bing West, who used to be the assistant secretary of defense during the Reagan administration. He's written this book called *The Strongest Tribe* about how the surge worked. After the show was over, he gave me a big squeeze on my hand and said, with the cameras off, "If General Petraeus invites you to do your show in Iraq, you should do it." I immediately thought, "Gosh, an improviser would say, 'Yes.'"

And by saying yes, you end up not just in Iraq, but in the White House filming a scene with the president.

Or naming the treadmill on the Space Station [after a NASA contest was subverted by write-in votes from Colbert fans]. Or the bridge in Hungary [which fans unsuccessfully tried to get named after Colbert]. Or the ice cream [which Ben & Jerry's packaged as Stephen Colbert's *AmeriCone Dream*]. All those things were extended improvisational games with my audience. Once you accept the challenge, you have to just go and say, "I will do it." And those are the times when I have not been able to balance my home life and the show life because that acceptance – if it's worth doing at all – is worth doing with the abandonment of intercourse.

simplest show, then it's "The Joy Machine" as opposed to "The Machine." Considering the speed at which we do it, we'll get caught in the gears really quickly unless we also approach it with joy.

I noticed at the taping that you make an effort to connect with the audience rather than just using them for laughter and applause and energy.

Yeah, it makes sense for what I do. I like them. I like people. I don't know if I always did, but I do now.

What do you think made you turn that corner?

Just not being personally miserable all the time. I was 22 or 23 when I made a decision not to be actively Hamlet-like and miserable in my daily life, and the decision helped a lot. Living vitally is not easier than living morbidly – it's just better. People are all we've got.

I like being grateful – I really do. The people in Iraq were so grateful that we came, but the feeling of gratitude we had in return was enormous. It was a physical thing in the air during the shows. It was almost as if I didn't see the audience – I only saw the grateful space between us. It was as beautiful and awesome as a night sky.

I'm somewhat surprised by your sincerity and positivity. It's not just unexpected considering your persona, but it's also rare for comedians.

I don't know. I don't talk to a lot of people. I've worked with the same people for many, many years, so generally people don't raise eyebrows about my attitude. The only thing that seems in any way surprising to people sometimes is that, however imperfectly I may achieve it, I do have

"I was 22 or 23 when I made a decision not to be actively Hamlet-like and miserable. Living vitally is not easier than living morbidly – it's just better."

People often get successful by saying yes to things, but when there are so many demands being made on you, can't "yes" also be a path to ruin?

Yeah, that's another thing. At all times, there is some voice calling you to simplicity, and you can say yes to that too.

What's an example of saying yes to simplicity?

Finding joy in the present achievement of today's action. I have this on my computer [removes a piece of paper taped to his computer]. It says, "Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." I call the show, jokingly, "The Joy Machine," because if you can do it with joy, even in the

some sense of personal religiosity. I go to church, and I'm a Catholic. But I know plenty of comedians who are not dour. I worked with Steve Carell for years. He's not a dour guy. My friend Amy Sedaris, she's not a downer; she's a pip.

When I interviewed Sacha Baron Cohen, he said that what enables him to go into an arena full of people who hate him is that he knows he has the faith and stability of his parents behind him. Is that true for you when you play this sort of buffoon?

Probably. I think all the time about something my mother said to me many times as a child: "In the line of eternity, what does this matter?" In that regard,

MOUNT COLBERT
In just four years,
the talk-show host
has become an
American icon.



I'm very hard to embarrass. I really don't mind making a fool of myself, because I have some sense of who I am beyond this fool – I hope. And I think some of that comes from my mother. I don't actually believe that the present social norm is some sort of eternal truth.

What do you mean by "the present social norm"?

Like how you're supposed to look. For example, I have khaki pants on and a pink button-down shirt. Completely preppy, because that's just how I'm always dressed – I have no personal sense of fashion. It doesn't matter to me at all. Regard for people's appearance or regard for social norms are fine pastimes, but they have no meaning. I don't mind looking like an idiot or being ugly. That helps me a lot, and I definitely get that from my mom. "None of this matters" is what I was taught over and over again.

You clearly have a strong sense of ethics. It's important to you to be a good person.

There's no guarantee that I'm not giving you a persona now, you realize that? Is this me or is this just the character seeming like a good guy?

Good point. How do I know you're not practicing a new character right now?

I don't think I could make those choices with this schedule. I definitely would not take this time out to talk to you if I was going to do that. This is a perfectly lovely thing to do, but there's some part of my brain that's going, "What are you doing? Don't you realize that right now scripts are changing and edits are happening that will affect the show tonight, a show that will be taped once and then last forever?"

I have another little piece of paper back here [removes a piece of paper taped to the edge of his desk]. It just says, "Work," because nothing ever gets better unless you work. So I have "work" here and "joy" over there, and I try to put the two together somehow.

How do you reconcile your sense of ethics with interviews where people may feel hurt or humiliated afterward?

I don't go in like a ninja. I don't seduce them into a false situation. I say the same thing to all my guests, which is, "You know I'm doing a character, yes? And he's an idiot, and he will be willfully ignorant of what you know and care about. Honestly disabuse me of what you see as my ignorance, and then we'll have a good time." There must be something they want out of it, or they wouldn't come. I am not an assassin.

But what about the show where you told Rep. Barney Frank that he's overweight? He seemed pretty pissed.

Barney Frank did not have a good experience. I truly don't want to humiliate anyone. I'm also not doing political

score-settling. I am no one's warrior. I'm doing comedy. I like to be put in a position where I can do my jokes, because I do my jokes in juxtaposition to reality. But I never deceive anyone.

That said, there is something savage in the parody of the character.

Satire has a sharpened tip, for sure. I am imperfect in my gentility, I grant you that. You have to be driven a little bit by emotion, and our job is to try to swathe our emotion in jokes.

I notice that unlike Jon Stewart, you let the guests get the laughs and the applause and sometimes even win the argument.

Jon's pretty gracious, unless there is sort of a conceptual, intellectual fight that already existed. He doesn't start it, but he always finishes it, because he's an impressively quick person. I wouldn't want to get into a knife fight with him – a mental knife fight.

Like when he took down Tucker Carlson on "Crossfire"?

I remember when Carlson said, "Everybody thinks he rattled my cage." All I could think of was, "Man, they're still looking for pieces of your cage."

ment is and how it is based upon dislike rather than argument. But sometimes I just blankly disagree with the liberal position of my guest, and it gives me great joy and great juice to do the interview.

The interviews are my favorite thing to do on the show now. I have my plan, and I have three or four questions I know I'm going to ask, but generally speaking, I'm trying to pay attention to what they're doing so that I can ignorantly deconstruct their argument.

A lot of people view what you do as liberal versus conservative. But what you're saying is that the show is really about people who are flexible in their beliefs versus those who are fixed in their beliefs?

If there's a target in our present society, it's people not willing to change their minds. If you're not willing to change your mind about anything, given how much is changing and how the sands are shifting underneath our feet, then that dishonesty is certainly worthy of a joke or two.

Even if your goal is comedy, you must have some sort of agenda.

Absolutely not, because I don't really know much about politics. I don't

"President Bush was an excellent model of incurious authority. But I'm a well-intentioned, high-status idiot, and that exists under Bush or Obama."

Many people think you're the exact opposite of the character you play, but is there a degree to which part of you is what you make fun of in your character?

Absolutely, and it does not matter to me if people can tell which is which. I enjoy stepping over the line. I was overjoyed by the Ohio State University study that said conservatives and liberals not only enjoy my show equally but are each likely to think that I am on their side. That was an unexpected victory on my behalf. From the beginning of the show, I very much wanted to add a degree of veracity to my character, even though he's incredibly overblown and over-the-top. I think it's completely visible when I don't mean it. But occasionally I do mean it, and that helps with the confusion.

What are some of the things the character says that you also believe?

I've had guests who come on to put forth their argument through a book – liberal, anti-Bush-administration screeds – and I have enjoyed standing toe-to-toe with them. Not always because I disagree with what they're saying, but because I don't enjoy how facile their argu-

ment is and how it is based upon dislike rather than argument. I get disappointed with both sides. But I do like human behavior. So that's what I enjoy talking about, and sometimes politics reflects human behavior. If I thought I had a political point, I'd be in big trouble.

To what extent do you think conservative pundits like Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity are playing a character?

I think Bill's honest. I don't agree with his chain of thought or the quality of his thought, but he believes what he's doing. I think Hannity is far more playing a character – not even for a character's sake, but because that has an effect on the audience emotionally. He's playing a political game.

Do you ever dream in character?

No, but I dreamed last week that as a bit, my character holds up a liquor store. And it doesn't go well. I end up shooting someone twice, and I'm like, "Oh, shoot, now I have to do a funny perp walk." There were other people in the room, and they were going, "Should you really be thinking of that?" And I was going, "No, obviously I can't just walk out with the cuffs



Second City to the White House

(1) Second City compatriots Steve Carell, Paul Dinello, Colbert and Dave Razowsky (from left), in 1993. (2) Taping a segment for *The Colbert Report* with President Obama in the White House library in May. (3) Colbert with his mother at his college graduation, 1987.



on. It's got to be funny – do I goose-step, do I shimmy, what do I do?"

Then I said, "You guys think it was a pretty good bit, though, right?" And people were going, "Well, you did shoot a guy." I said, "Yeah, how's that guy doing, by the way? I should know that before I hold a funny press conference." They said, "He's OK. He's going to be fine." And I said, "Good, good, so it's still comedy."

Have you ever felt like you were in danger in real life?

On airplane flights and stuff like that, I've thought, "This is it." Although I flew with the F-16 Thunderbirds, and that's an hour of loops and barrel rolls and .9 Mach and pulling nine G's, so nothing in flying is ever going to bother me again after that. I'm still waiting to have been glad I did it.

You were never afraid to fly because of your family?

No. My father and two of my brothers died in a plane crash when I was a child, and I just thought, "What are the odds?" I didn't even get bothered by turbulence until I had children of my own, and then it just clicked in. But that's over now too.

Where do you think that inner resilience comes from?

My desire to see things positively comes from my mom. She raised me after her husband and two of her boys died – and she did a great job, and her faith played a great role in that. She's a loving, joyful, not-bitter woman and, boy, that's a great example to have in your life. It makes your travails seem pretty simple in respect.

A lot of people are amazed when you sing on the show with people like Elvis Costello and Willie Nelson. Have you ever had any voice training?

I did choir and things like that when I was in high school. I can tear off the bass line to Mozart's Mass. But my whole family sings. In my family, we could hug each other and kiss each other anytime we wanted for no reason whatsoever, and we were encouraged to sing around the house. My sister Margot and my brother Jay, I'd give anything for their voices. They're such angels, and the rest of us in the family just like belting it out.

Would you all sing carols on Christmas Eve?

Sure, we'd process through the house, and we still do it. My family is 50 people now – nieces and nephews and that sort of thing – and we process from the youngest to the oldest. The youngest puts the baby Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve, and we sing "Silent Night." It's very traditional.

I heard you were in a Rolling Stones cover band when you were younger.

I had a high school band called Shot in the Dark, and we played a lot of Stones. We weren't really a cover band, but I wore a tight jersey like Mick – a soccer jersey with a number zero on it that said COLBERT across the back. My brother Peter had been number zero. That was his jersey.

Do you believe the theory that the youngest sibling tends to clamor for the most attention and generally ends up becoming more of a performer?

Oh, sure, I had a built-in audience for that. I think my brothers and sisters are way funnier than I am – and they think they're funnier than I am too. Ask them, and they'll tell you. I wanted to tell stories like Ed, tell jokes like Billy, have a rapier wit like Jim, be quick like Mary or sing like Margot. Being the youngest, I caught

my mother saying to them once, "Listen to his stories – you listen to what he has to say." To this day, if an audience likes what I'm saying when I'm telling a story, I think that my mom got to them, and she's making them listen.

Did you ever go through a period where you lost your faith?

Yeah. It was a college-angst thing. But once I graduated from college, some Gideon literally gave me a

box of *The New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs* on the street in Chicago. I took one and opened it right away to Matthew, Chapter 5, which is the opening of the Sermon on the Mount. That whole chapter is essentially about not worrying. I didn't read it – it spoke to me, and it was an effortless absorption of the idea. Nothing came to me in a thunderbolt, but I thought to myself, "I'd be dumb not to re-examine this."

What caused you to go through that dark period?

Well, I had very sad events in my childhood. The death of my father and my brothers was understandably a shattering experience that I hadn't really dealt with in any way. And there comes a time when you're psychologically able to do so. I still don't like talking about it. It still is too fresh.

Do you think experiencing that has helped what you do in any [Cont. on 110]



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95 calories, 2.6g carbs, 0.6g protein and 0.0g fat, per 12 oz.



FLASH FORWARD
Joseph Fiennes faces
the aftermath of a
global time lapse.

REASON #2

Time Travel Gets Even Weirder

'FLASHFORWARD' IS THE KIND OF big-budget, big-ambition thriller that's supposed to be out of date, but the show is so ingeniously structured that it more than holds up the standard of *Lost* and *Heroes*. Joseph Fiennes plays Mark Benford, an L.A. FBI agent who's right in the middle of a high-speed car chase when he blacks out. So does everybody else on Earth, for precisely two min-

utes and 17 seconds. During that time lapse, everyone catches a glimpse of their lives exactly six months into the future: April 29th, 2010. Benford has a vision of gun-

FlashForward Sept. 24, 8 p.m., ABC

wielding assailants; his wife sees herself having an affair; his buddy sees his dead daughter alive again. The blackout scene

is genuinely scary, as planes crash, the Eiffel Tower catches fire and Benford's little girl offers a *Poltergeist*-style utterance: "I had a bad dream. I dreamt there were no more good days." Is everybody's vision of the future a done deal? Or do they have the power to change it? As Benford races to solve the mystery, *FlashForward* has more than enough dramatic juice to live up to its megaclever premise.

ROB SHEFFIELD

WHAT I LIKE

AMY POEHLER
PARKS AND RECREATION



'Law & Order'

I watch *Law & Order* every night before I go to sleep, because it makes me miss home a little less. To me, it's a love letter to New York City. There are so few shows shooting in

New York anymore - everything's here in L.A. - and there's nothing like watching old reruns and seeing CBGB in the background. Back in the Nineties, I remember hearing

people joke about how the city was filled with guys loading crates into the backs of trucks and nonchalantly answering questions for the cops, like, "Yeah, I've seen that girl." But then I moved to New York in 1996, and that's actually how things were! Life just happens around you all the time, and you

can see that on the show. It makes me nostalgic. The show was also a great breeding ground for upcoming talent - if you watch old episodes, you'll see a 24-year-old Peter Sarsgaard and a pre-*Sopranos* Edie Falco. One of my biggest regrets is that I never got my chance to be on *Law & Order* as a smart-talking street youth.

REASON #3

'The Mighty Boosh'

This British sensation on Adult Swim features two hapless zookeepers in the world's worst indie-rock band ("Feel the power of my fusion lick!"). It's surreal and painful but extremely addictive.

REASON #4

Tank Porn

What G4 does for games, the Military Channel does for vintage tanks. Their greatest hit? A VH1-style countdown of the *Top Ten Tanks!* Mass destruction made soothing.

REASON #5

The All-American Anti-Hero

LIKE DON DRAPER, THE CHAIN-smoking, bourbon-swilling existential hero of AMC's *Mad Men*, Jon Hamm is a self-made man. His parents split when he was two, and his mother died when he was 10. (After Hamm's first audition for the role, *MM* creator Matthew Weiner reportedly turned to his casting director and said, "That man was not raised by his parents.")

Now Hamm finds himself in the curious position of channeling his father onscreen. "My dad was a businessman in the Sixties, and he had a million suits, and he drank at lunch and smoked too much – he was That Guy," Hamm admits. "So when I'm playing Don, I know how to become that, from the very assured way I walk to the way I speak to people."

Physically, Hamm offers the perfect model of how the American Dream can

take its toll on a man. His body language – the Gregory Peck posture, the poker-face stare – conveys just how hard Draper is struggling to maintain control of his family, his job, his life. Everything about Hamm, from his soft-but-stern voice to his Brylcreemed hair, screams leading

Mad Men Sundays, 10 p.m., AMC

man – though he recently showed off his comic range with a guest appearance as Tina Fey's boyfriend on *30 Rock*. The guy was genuinely funny – and he's the only actor this year to receive Emmy nominations for both drama and comedy.

"He's the rare dramatic actor who has the same nerdy references as comedy writers," says Fey. "On set, it was like, 'Uh? Why handsome man like *Monty Python*?'"

Surely he was on dates while we were watching *The Young Ones!*"

For now, though, Hamm is more comfortable in serious roles. ("There are too many people out there who are funnier than I am," he says.) Good thing, too, since *Mad Men* is going to be even more challenging this season.

"The big theme is change," Hamm says. "America is coming out of the Elvis era into the Beatles era, and there are already advisers in Vietnam in 1962. That's all about to blow up. But it's not just politics that's shifting. You're going to see the issues in Don's marriage really come to a head." And when they do, he promises, you'll be surprised. "These episodes," he insists, "are fuller and deeper and funnier and sadder and weirder than anything I've ever seen."

MELISSA MAERZ

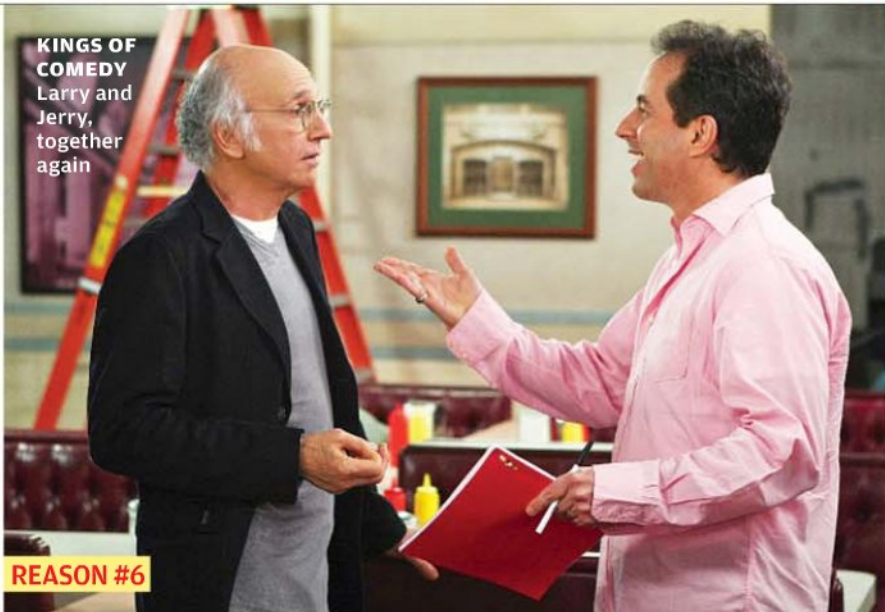


JON HAMM

The only actor to receive Emmy nods this year for both comedy and drama

GROOMING BY SABRINA BEDRANI AT TRACEYMATTINGLY.COM

KINGS OF COMEDY
Larry and Jerry, together again



REASON #6

'Curb' Reunites 'Seinfeld'

THERE'S NO GREATER SEISMIC shock on TV this fall than the *Seinfeld* cast reuniting on the new season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Though Jerry, Jason Alexander and Julia Louis-Dreyfus have made cameos on the series before, this marks the first time they'll appear together with Michael Richards on a script-

Curb Your Enthusiasm **Sept. 20, 9 p.m., HBO**

ed TV show since *Seinfeld* went off the air in 1998. It's like seeing the Skipper rise from the dead to reassemble the *Gilligan's Island* castaways, or all six Brady kids moving back in with Mike and Carol.

The brilliance of *Curb* is the way Larry David takes a key aspect of *Seinfeld* – the cringe-inducing humiliations of his alter ego George Costanza – and amps them up to operatic levels of middle-aged agony.

David suffers the stings of wounded vanity on a scale that makes *Seinfeld* reruns almost comforting by comparison. "American comedy is based on the premise that most people want to be liked – me included," says Jay Leno, a longtime fan. "Larry's isn't, and that's what makes it funny."

With *Seinfeld* appearing as Leno's first guest on September 14th and preparing his own NBC reality series, *The Marriage Ref*, the timing of the reunion feels perfect. In a typical *Curb* move, the *Seinfeld* stars play themselves as actors rehearsing – what else? – a *Seinfeld* reunion. Watching Larry and Jerry together feels like eavesdropping on two curmudgeons at a diner while they eat their bagels and schmear. The best scenes feature David trying to persuade each actor to sign on for the reunion – even though he admits such gimmicks are "so lame, they never work." **M.M.**

REASON #7

TV's Best Maid Ever

She serves *Gossip Girl*'s Blair Waldorf faithfully and ruthlessly, no matter how badly she's treated! She bitches out Chuck Bass in Polish when she gets mad! She alludes to a life of intrigue and danger! The kinkiest of TV maids even has her own cult following and her own "Chasing Dorota" spinoff online. As played by Zuzanna Szadkowska, she's

the best eye-roller on TV since Al Gore. There's something slightly twisted about her dominant/submissive costume-fetish role-play with Blair, indulging her mistress' whims even as she sniffs, "Miss Blair, your martyr act – no good." She's smarter than Alice from *The Brady Bunch*, sassier than Florence from *The Jeffersons*, more dangerous than Mr. French from *Family Affair*. No wonder fans crave the sound of Dorota's throaty rasp as she utters the fateful words "Yes, Miss Blair." **R.S.**

Gossip Girl
Mondays, 9 p.m., The CW



Dorota:
Maid of honor

REASON #8

A New 'Heroes' Villain

Robert Knepper, the grimmest slimeball from *Prison Break*, joins the cast as a Koresch-like guru. When he rasps, "They will accept us . . . or they will fear us!" Sylar suddenly doesn't look so bad.

REASON #9

Old-School Cop Banter

Southland takes every cliché of cop-show wisecrackery to absurd new heights. Crook: "You're arresting me? What are the charges?" Cop: "No charge – the services of the LAPD are free!"

REASON #10

Courtney Cox Returns

Two words: *Cougar Town*. On this ABC sitcom, Cox is a divorcee who bangs twentysomething dudes – the flip side of *Friends*, where she was sleeping with Tom Selleck. Well played, Monica.

REASON #11

Tom DeLay on 'Dancing With the Stars'

The disgraced Republican congressman always looked like you could trust him about as far as you could throw him. Now we get to find out how far that is.

REASON #12

'Melrose Place' 2.0

We knew it'd be a shameless orgy of Nineties nostalgia – just not *this* shameless. Ashlee Simpson as the naive ingénue! Now all it needs is Heather Locklear to slap these new kids around.

WHAT I LIKE
SAMANTHA BEE
THE DAILY SHOW



'Nurse Jackie'

Everyone in Hollywood worries so much about making lead characters "relatable" and "likable," which is boring – and also probably the reason why hardly any shows make it onto my queue. But I always look forward to *Nurse Jackie*, because I feel like the title character hasn't been focus-grouped to death. She's crabby and horny and complex. You know, like an actual person. There are loose ends. She cheats on her husband, whom she loves. It's deliciously messy. And I appreciate the fact that, even though it's set in a hospital, no one says, "Stat," no one recovers from their inoperable brain tumor due to a Christmas miracle, and no one possesses the ability to talk to ghosts.

REASON #13

The Probing Genius of 'Frontline'

IN A TV-NEWS LANDSCAPE WHERE A 15-word "chyron" at the bottom of the screen passes for in-depth coverage, David Fanning's *Frontline* stands a world apart. "David takes on big subjects that require real, painstaking reporting and produces work that is smart, gripping and subtle," says *New York Times* executive editor Bill Keller. "That's extraordinary in TV today." Embarking on his 28th season, *Frontline*'s executive producer continues to draw in viewers by tackling hot-button

Frontline Oct. 13, 9 p.m., PBS

subjects with fearless, fast-paced journalism, expert storytelling – and none of the fustiness you might expect from PBS.

A South African expat with a boyish mop of curly brown hair, Fanning says his mission is to provide viewers with a "single bright path through difficult territory." Nowhere has that ethic been more evident than in the show's sharp coverage of the economic meltdown. Last winter, with the global collapse still under way, Fanning's team produced a startling exposé of Wall Street's unhinged investments. In June, *Frontline* followed up by detailing how Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson had forced Bank of America and Merrill Lynch into a shotgun marriage – using \$138 billion in taxpayer money. This season, the show continues its deep dive on the econ-



"ONE OF THE LAST GIANTS" Producer David Fanning running the show at *Frontline*

omy – tracing the roots of the meltdown to deregulation in the Clinton era and examining the nation's epidemic of joblessness through the lens of a single barbershop. It also takes a critical look at America's role in Afghanistan – adding to the more than 40 hours it has already devoted to documenting the War on Terror.

Fanning, who founded *Frontline* in 1983, has produced more than 500 inves-

tigative documentaries and racked up 39 Emmys in his career – without ever turning the conversation or the camera back on himself. "He's not the frontman – he's just the force," says Keller. Lowell Bergman, the legendary correspondent who has collaborated with Fanning for a decade, has even higher praise for the producer: "He's one of the last giants standing, period. Print or broadcast." **TIM DICKINSON**



Cracking the code of geek love

The Nerd-Bonding on 'Big Bang'

Anyone up for a game of Klingon Boggle? Want to borrow some Darth Vader "No More Tears" shampoo? The geekery on *The Big Bang Theory* is all in the details. The show transcends its one-joke premise – two science nerds and the

girl next door – by nailing the elaborate codes these awkward boy-men use as a way of talking to each other. Johnny Galecki, Jim Parsons, Kunal Nayyar and Simon Helberg experience real warmth in their high-flown debates

over string theory and their endless games of *Star Wars*-themed 20 Questions. When they play Rock Paper Scissors Spock Lizard, they're really talking about their feelings, in their pitiful little way. This season has a big plot kick: Physicist

Leonard (Galecki) and the waitress across the hall (Kaley Cuoco) finally get it on. But nobody wants to see a functional boy-girl situation get in the way of another *Age of Conan* marathon. **R.S.**

The Big Bang Theory Sept. 21, 9:30 p.m., CBS

WHAT I LIKE

J.J. ABRAMS
LOST, FRINGE



'Man vs. Wild'

It proves to me, every time I watch it, that I would die almost instantly if dropped from a helicopter into conditions that Bear Grylls seems to actually enjoy. His predicaments are horrifying. His respect for cultures and nature is refreshing. His skills are as wild as the terrain and surprisingly educational. I've gotten to a place in my life where I live for that moment where Bear bites into some red, rubbery, wet, inner-spongy, recently fully-in-use organ and makes the Face – that "Holy shit, this tastes worse than anything ever" face – and then gives his hysterical critique. He could not possibly make me feel less like a man (the series starring me, *Jew vs. Wild*, would last one-fifth of one episode), but I'm addicted.

NEW!

AXE
SKIN CONTACT
SENSITIVE
SHOWER GEL

AXE
SKIN CONTACT

SENSITIVE

...MY
SKIN...

...IT'S
SOMEHOW...

...TRANSFORMING!

ALL
DONE?
NOW I'M
GONNA GET
READY...

LEZAP!

THE MOMENT
OF TRUTH.
THEY TOUCH.

WHOOOSH!

HIS
SKIN...

...CAN'T
STOP...

...TOUCHING!

MAKE YOUR SKIN
IRRESISTIBLE TO TOUCH

AXE
SKIN CONTACT

SENSITIVE

AXE
SKIN CONTACT

SENSITIVE



REASON #15

ART IMITATES LIFE
 "If you can get
 me fisted, I'll do it!"
 Duchovny jokes.

David Duchovny Can't Help Himself

LET'S SAY ALL YOU WANT TO TALK about with David Duchovny is his sexy cool show *Californication*, now entering its third season on Showtime, in which he plays Hank Moody, blocked L.A. novelist, conflicted family man and around-the-clock, bed-hopping hedonist extraordinaire. "The show is more intelligent than people give it credit for, because they're blinded by the tits and ass," Duchovny says. "But that's just human nature. In the business, you have 10 seconds to advertise your show. You can say (a) it's about a guy who is trying to get back to his first love, or (b) it's about a guy who gets tits and ass every week. OK, we're going with (b). That's its calling card."

As calling cards go, it's been a good one. The show has bolstered Duchovny's post-*X-Files* career, and the new season promises to up the T&A ante, if only because Hank takes a job as a college professor. The show is soft-core porn for English majors, with its giggle-inducing excesses tempered by its spot-on, through-the-Holly-

wood-looking-glass take on the lonely life of a middle-aged male writer – the empty pages, the out-of-control agents, the endless lure of younger women.

The problem is, no matter what Duchovny says, all you can hear are unfortunate echoes of his recent public travails – how last year he and his wife, the actress Téa Leoni, separated after 11 years and Duchovny entered rehab for sex addiction, re-

Californication Sept. 27, 10 p.m., Showtime

portedly to Internet porn. They have since gotten back together. "We're good," he says, speaking openly about it for the first time. "It's been a difficult year, for sure. But difficulties in life can sometimes be the best thing that ever happen to a union, and it feels like that for me."

Duchovny has decided he can no longer talk about sex as freely as he used to. "I don't want to be as flip as I was in the past," he says. "It's an area that's more fraught with – um, I don't know what it's fraught

with, but it's not something I want to discuss so lightly." But a moment later, human nature being what it is, he can't help himself. "To be honest with you, and this is going to sound odd, most of the time with *Californication*, I'm the one to say something is too crass," he says. "I turn into the house prude. I'll say, 'This is just nasty!' Last year we had a porn star who had done a fisting video. Now, 'fisting' is a funny word to say. But I said to the writers, 'Fisting a woman is not so funny. Fisting a man, now *that's* funny. If you can get me fisted, I'll do it!' Just me bending over, and hazy shapes looming behind me."

So much for the house prude. But Duchovny soon moves on. One of his favorite mottos, he says, is from Nietzsche – *amor fati*, love of fate. "Whatever happens to you, fall in love with it, because there's really no other option," he says. "You can decide to rail against the fates. You can think, 'Oh, I'm a victim!' or 'Oh, woe is me!' But it happened. So love it. And see what the good is coming out of it."

ERIK HEDEGAARD

JAY-Z

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REASON #16

TV's Incredible Human Lie Detectors

What happened to TV cops? It used to be enough to talk tough and bust perps. Now you have to be some sort of crazed genius with an uncanny ability to spot lies at a single glance. After

eight years of being misled by our highest authorities, the American people apparently crave someone who can cut through the bullshit. So how do these supercops do it? R.S.

				
Cal Lightman 'Lie to Me' (Fox) Played by Tim Roth	Patrick Jane 'The Mentalist' (CBS) Played by Simon Baker	Peter Bishop 'Fringe' (Fox) Played by Joshua Jackson	Brenda Johnson 'The Closer' (TNT) Played by Kyra Sedgwick	Shawn Spencer 'Psych' (USA) Played by James Roday
How They Do It Psychologist who can read faces for lying "tells" and "micro-expressions."	Pretending to be a psychic on TV has left him with the ability to spot people's BS.	Honed his ability to see through bluffs as a con man and world-class poker player.	Makes killers confess by using her Southern accent and hair that glows like uranium.	Pretends to be psychic, but really has photographic memory and OCD eye for details.
How They Got This Way Learned to read faces due to guilt over his mother's suicide.	Wife and kid were murdered by a serial killer he mocked on the air.	Mad-scientist dad monkeyed with his brain, driving him to life as a shady drifter.	Her painful divorce left her with the knack for knowing for a fact that all men are liars.	Raised by his nagging father, a cop who drilled him in detective methods.
Most Annoying Trait Not only is he always right, he will give you a pompous lecture explaining why.	His hair. Plus he never explains his brilliant intuitions, which seems like cheating.	Never stops with the cocky wisecracks.	Can come off as a prissy Southern sorority-girl control freak.	Debates whether a killer arsonist should be called a "karsonist" or an "arssassin."
Choice Quote "The average person tells three lies in 10 minutes" of chitchat.	"There is no 'other side.'"	"I'm pretty good at reading people. That's sort of what I do."	"I like to have the answers before I ask questions."	"I'm kind of a slave to my visions."

WHAT I LIKE
RACHEL MADDOW
THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW



'Foyle's War'

I'm absolutely addicted to a British drama called *Foyle's War*. It's about Christopher Foyle, a policeman solving murders in England during World War II. I always learn something fascinating from every episode. I lived in England for three years, but before this show I'd never thought about England's internal refugees during the war - people evacuated to outlying provinces for their own safety. And you forget that there were German POW camps on British soil. It's especially interesting to watch the show now, with what's happening in Iraq and Afghanistan. World War II was the gold standard for romanticizing war - but on *Foyle's War*, nothing is romantic. One episode is set in a psychiatric ward - a soldier is abandoned by his wife because of his illness. It reminds you that war is not character-building.



BRICK CITY
Mayor Cory Booker fires up Newark's cops.

REASON #17

Real Reality TV

Forget *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*: The wildest reality show set in the Garden State is *Brick City*, a five-part documentary airing September 21st on the Sundance Channel. The series follows Cory Booker, the hard-charging, Oxford-

educated mayor of Newark, as he teams up with Police Director Garry McCarthy in a battle to lower the city's murder rate. But *Brick* goes even deeper by tossing in the tale of Creep (a reformed Crip) and Jayda (a Blood), two young lovers expecting a

baby girl and working as guidance counselors for troubled kids - until Jayda is served with an arrest warrant for an old assault charge.

The two dramas unfold with all the grit of *The Wire*, punctuated by the shooting of a 10-year-old, a gangbanger's funeral, the city's crumbling economy and a beef between McCarthy and the chief of police. This is as real as reality TV gets. T.D.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOE VILES/FOX; CLIFF LIPSON/CBS; JUSTIN STEPHENS/FOX; KAREN NEAL/TNT; MATTHIAS CLAMER/USA NETWORK; SUNDANCE CHANNEL; ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO

ED HELMS
 "There's more of me in Andy than I want to admit."



REASON #18

'The Office' Jackass

CALLING ALL JACKASSES: ED HELMS knows who you are. He knows where you buy your brightly colored pants, and he's heard you name-dropping your slightly-above-average alma mater, and what's more, he's taking notes, slowly working all your foibles into Andy Bernard, the Frisbee-golf-loving Cornell grad he plays on *The Office*. "Andy is an amalgamation of all the douchebags that I've dealt with

The Office Thursdays, 9 p.m., NBC

in my life," Helms says. "He's the frat boy, the a cappella nerd, and the Connecticut yacht-club slickster - except he isn't pulling off any of those roles very well."

Don't tell that to the dozens of Facebook groups devoted to the 'Nard Dog, including "I Go to Cornell Because of Andy Bernard" and "When Andy Bernard Sings on The Office, I Get a Little Turned On!" It's easy to understand why people feel real affection for the guy: He just wants so badly

to be liked. Everything Andy does that makes his co-workers want to stab him with a ballpoint pen - harmonizing to an Indigo Girls song, moonwalking past accounting - stems from a sincere attempt to make friends. "What I envy most about Andy is that he's so eager to give everything of himself to somebody," Helms says. "In my life, I overthink everything - I'm a little neurotic about relationships. But Andy's like, 'Screw it, man, I'm in love!'"

For Helms, a self-professed "shy performer" who sang with an a cappella group in college and has played banjo for years, that foolhardiness has been therapeutic. "I'm a bashful musician, and Andy is really overt and obnoxious about his music, so I get to exorcise all my insecurities through him," Helms confesses. "There's probably a lot more of me in Andy than I want to admit. I even like the way he dresses in that corny blue-blood-on-a-budget way. Maybe I should be embarrassed about that, but I'm not."

M.M.

REASON #19

The Manliest Man Show

It doesn't get darker on TV these days than FX's biker-gang drama, *Sons of Anarchy*. Not since *The Sopranos* has a gang of such sweaty, beef-eating, face-punching, strip-clubbing outlaws ruled the small screen. "So much television is geared toward women now," says Charlie Hunnam, who plays Jax Teller, the gang's VP of gunrunning. "So I'm doing my best to explore the darkest sides of society with some real shitkickin' boys." And thanks to a real-life biker gang that recently invited Hunnam to hang out with them for "research purposes," the testosterone



Jax Teller rides rough on *Sons of Anarchy*.

is spiking even higher this season: Hardcore punk rocker Henry Rollins plays a white separatist, and Hunnam promises that the climactic showdown between Jax and his nemesis Clay will be "explosive." "We filmed it inside the Los Angeles County prison, and my face got bashed into some metal bars," Hunnam says. "It knocked out my tooth." Even better news? This season, the ladies get the best "dude" lines. "I don't want to turn him into a little vegan pussy," Jax's mom complains, refusing to give her baby grandson soy milk. "Don't worry," Jax's girlfriend counters. "He can drink it in his wife-beater onesie."

M.M.

Sons of Anarchy Tuesdays, 10 p.m., FX

WHAT I LIKE
CRAIG FERGUSON
 THE LATE LATE SHOW



'MythBusters'

MythBusters is the only science show that feels real, and it's the only kid-friendly show I can stand to watch with my eight-year-old son. There was one episode about a sky diver whose chute supposedly didn't open and he fell on a teeter-totter and threw a girl seven stories into the air. I thought, "That's a myth? Who ever heard of that myth?" But then I learned it was implausible, so thank God I don't have to worry about that happening.



THE SHOW HITS THE ROAD
The Gang (from left) on tour: Glenn Howerton, Rob McElhenney, Kaitlin Olson, Charlie Day and Danny DeVito

GROOMING BY LEAN VAUTROT



REASON #20

The Dark Side of 'Sunny'

IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA" revels in always pushing the joke just a little too far. In one episode, "The Gang" – father Frank, kids Sweet Dee and Dennis, and friends Charlie and Mac – gets hooked on crack so they can apply for welfare. In another, Charlie fakes getting cancer – ha-ha! – and uses his illness to manipulate a girl. In fact, *Sunny* has earned such a fanatical following that it's now the first sitcom to ever inspire a sold-out live tour.

It started in April, when the cast did a live performance of a *Sunny* episode called "The Nightman Cometh" – a musical – at a nightclub in West Hollywood. Hundreds of fans arrived, decked out as the show's codpiece-sporting

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia
Thursdays, 10 p.m., FX

superhero and belting out the musical's theme song. "When you're on TV, you're so sheltered from your fans," says Rob McElhenney (Mac), who created the show with co-stars Glenn Howerton (Dennis) and Charlie Day (Charlie). "Finding out that so many people share our sense of humor was shocking."

Now fans in six lucky U.S. cities can watch Danny DeVito (Frank) dressed in a troll costume, singing about rapping a little boy. "It's a dream come true," says DeVito. "Years ago, when I was doing *Taxi*, there was an actors' strike, and while we were waiting for it to settle, I said, 'Why don't we do an episode onstage?' Now I finally get to make that happen. Plus, I'm Italian – you'd have to ask me not to sing."

The new season, which premieres September 17th, promises to be even stranger. The Gang stages an intervention for Frank, who mistakes the whole thing for a roast. And Sweet Dee, offering her services as a surrogate mother, winds up rivaling Octomom. Fans who show up on the tour are so excited, they're having trouble containing themselves. "The other night, a woman grabbed my husband's butt," says Kaitlin Olson (Sweet Dee), who is married to McElhenney. "It was like, 'Hey, bitch! I'm right here!'"

M.M.



THE HUNGER
Padma has a taste
for fear, not food.

REASON #21

'Top Chef' Dominatrix

WHILE ALL THE OTHER REALITY competitions run out of gas, Padma Lakshmi keeps cracking the whip. Glamorous, humorless and mean to just about everyone, she's the ultimate food-porn dominatrix. For the women who

Top Chef Wednesdays, 10 p.m., Bravo

watch, Padma is the key: She's exactly who they like to think they look like when they dress up for dinner. She never cooks a thing on the show – she just makes one of her delicately calibrated this-is-not-saucy-enough

faces, trades bitchy banter bonbons with the guest judges and ends each episode by failing to hide her pleasure as she tells the losing chef, "Pack up your knives."

Now Padma has moved the entire show to Las Vegas, with a new cast of emotionally crippled chefs: Faves include a huge guy named Hector ("I cook with COJONES!"), a cancer survivor called Robin, and Ron, a Haitian refugee. There are plenty of Vegas gimmicks – a visit to a casino, the Stardust showgirls – but what makes the show is watching the chefs work, with their rage issues, their repellent neck tattoos and

their creepy habit of talking to the food ("Yeah, work for me, baby! That's it!").

Food is always connected to emotion on reality TV, whether it's cozy (Rachael Ray) or competitive (*Ace of Cakes*). But *Top Chef* is the most intense, because it equates food with fear. Padma's true hunger is for humiliation. She never takes pleasure in a single bite – her passion comes from using her taste buds as a weapon. Gordon Ramsay may strive to be America's favorite psycho chef on *Hell's Kitchen*, but Padma manages to be way scarier without even touching a stove. Knives out! R.S.

REASON #22

The Truly Obscene Stuff Isn't Just on Pay-Per-View

Robot Chicken is the only thing on cable that won't make you feel guilty about watching a bear sodomize a little girl. That's what's great about Adult Swim's stop-motion animation comedy, which follows a cyborg chicken who's forced to view bad television: The sketches he watches appeal to the

tittering man-boy in all of us, just by getting violent with baby animals. "Comedy's about contrasts," says head writer Doug Goldstein. "You take one thing that seems innocent, add violence to it, and you have two hands coming together." Like a grade-school kid getting a blowtorch to the face. M.M.



Robot Chicken
bashes babies.

REASON #23

Jeff Goldblum, Nut Job

On *Law & Order*: CI he's the same neurotic loudmouth he always plays. But by hamming it up while colleagues play it cool, he provides the kickiest sign of life on this routine procedural.

REASON #24

It's Always Sunny on 'Dexter'


Michael C. Hall strikes again as the serial killer – but all the gore seems glamorous in the Florida sunshine.

REASON #25

To See Who Will Replace Paula on 'Idol'

Paula! We thought you were Forever Our Girl! Now your Twitter-fueled Abdull-cation has left a lonely-eyed nation without our weekly diva dosage

of druggy babbling, wobbly dancing and tearful outbursts. Here's a rundown of the contenders we're rooting for to replace you on *American Idol*. R.S.

Contender	Big Hit	Pros	Cons	Odds
 TAYLOR DAYNE	"Tell It to My Heart"	If anyone can equal Paula as princess of the <i>Club MTV</i> era, it's this brassy Long Island beauty; has Broadway chops; hair can stop bullets in midair and scare them into turning around.	Already tried TV as a contestant on CMT Nashville makeover show <i>Gone Country</i> but lost to Sheila E.	3-1
 JESSICA SIMPSON	"Take My Breath Away"	Has no shame; has no brain. Her vagina has the power to destroy pro-football teams; the "Maybe I should shut up before I humiliate myself" software never installed on her hard drive.	Might sing; nobody needs Joe Simpson back in their lives.	4-1
 PAT BENATAR	"Love Is a Battlefield"	Every wussy chick on <i>Idol</i> tries to sing "Heartbreaker" or "We Belong," so why not bring back the original rock goddess to show them how it's done? Invented leotards-and-headband look.	She's a heart-breaker, love taker and dream maker; gave her box set the title <i>Synchronistic Wanderings</i> .	10-1
 COURTNEY LOVE	"Miss World"	Invented rock music; wrote all of Nirvana's songs; single-handedly made Pam Anderson's Comedy Central roast one of the funniest hours in TV history; prone to falling down and mumbling.	None	Pick 'em
 GLENN BECK	"Obama Is, I Believe, a Racist"	Always on the verge of a batshit crying tantrum; can blubber as unintelligibly as Paula; incapable of speaking into a mike without sounding like one of the chicks from the <i>Rock of Love</i> bus.	Probably thinks Randy Jackson hates white people.	60-1



Ware reporting from Afghanistan

REASON #26

The Hard-Drinking, Ill-Shaven Credibility of Michael Ware

CNN's veteran war correspondent treats life as a contact sport. For proof, look no further than his nose, crushed a dozen times at rugby. "Played well," Ware says, "it truly is a hard man's game." So is his day job. Stationed in Iraq for six years, the 40-year-old Australian was kidnapped, threatened with execution and shot at by both sides. That's because he made a point of venturing beyond the Green Zone. "You can't report a war from your hotel room or from the hotel bar," he says. "You've got to be out there." His secret? Hemingway-esque levels of self-medication. "I try to stay as drunk for as long as possible while I'm here," he told Bill Maher. "In fact, I'm drinking now." Ware's boozy, death-defying reporting gives him a remarkably clear-eyed view of the world's most pressing conflicts. Reporting on Afghanistan, he traced the war's roots to Pakistan. "It suits them to have the Taliban making trouble," he tells RS. "That's got more to do with Americans coming home in body bags than anything Osama's ever done." T.O.

REASON #27

Redneck 'Supernatural'

This show features the Bo and Luke Duke of demon hunters, battling evil in their '67 Impala. This season they take on Boss Hogg himself - Lucifer - in a bang-up Judgment Day champagne jam.

REASON #28

The Victorian Insane Asylum on 'House'

You don't see old-world sanitariums like this on TV anymore, with all its haunted-house ambience. Just the place for Dr. House to get his sarcastic edge back.

WHAT I LIKE

DENIS LEARY
RESCUE ME



'30 Rock'

I can watch Tina Fey's *30 Rock* anytime, especially when it's Alec Baldwin and her. If I was teaching a

comedy-acting class right now, that's what I would show the students. I don't think there's another male-female combo

like Baldwin and Fey since James Gandolfini faced off with Edie Falco on *The Sopranos*. Baldwin did a recent episode where he and Will Arnett had a voice-off, and it was incredible. I met Baldwin on the sidewalk once in New York, and I made a fool out of myself

because I didn't know what to say - I was just blubbering. Baseball players talk about Reggie Jackson hitting the light tower with a line-drive homer in the '71 all-star game. Baldwin is famous like that in acting terms. He's a massively talented guy.

Five of Fall's Best New Shows

TV may be a year-round flow these days, what with the constant barrage of new cable shows every five minutes, but fall is still the season we all look forward to. No matter how cluttered our viewing schedule gets in this Hulu-dazed world,

no matter how many times we've been burned before, all is forgiven in the fall. From glee-club kids to vampire sex, this year brings us glimmers of real hope. Welcome back, TV. It's like you never went away.

R.S.

REASON #29

The Sexy Alien Invaders on 'V'

Nov. 3, 8 p.m., ABC

The original *V* ran only a few nights, but the classic Eighties sci-fi miniseries and its water-stealing, rodent-eating aliens inspired a devoted cult following. On this reboot, the Visitors are even sexier and more sinister, with bigger spaceships and shorter skirts. Morena Baccarin is malevolently slinky as Anna, the Visitor leader who arrives with a message of peace, hiding her evil plans behind that glam exterior. She promptly gets into a flirtatious tangle with TV reporter Chad Decker, played by *Party of Five*'s Scott Wolf as pure slimeball corruption. The 9/11 parallel is laid on a little thick, but the war-of-the-world scenes are deftly done. If nothing else, *V* proves that there's a divine spirit in the universe who answers the prayers of lonely sci-fi fanboys. Or maybe there are just fanboys who grow up to make those prayers come true.



Morena Baccarin glams Earth.



LL Cool J fights crime.



Christian Slater makes a comeback.



Matthew Morrison sings his heart out.



Ian Somerhalder rises from the grave.

REASON #31

LL Cool J on 'NCIS: Los Angeles'

Sept. 22, 9 p.m., CBS

LL Cool J's career as a TV leading man has been less than stellar - remember the sitcom where he played a nanny? - but he adapts fantastically to the role of a super-secret agent. LL teams up with his fellow Nineties icon Chris O'Donnell, and the two work up a little *48 Hrs.* chemistry as they chase terrorists, interrogate perps and out-swagger their *NCIS* counterparts over in the Mark Harmon original.

REASON #32

Christian Slater on 'The Forgotten'

Sept. 22, 10 p.m., ABC

Speaking of forgotten... welcome back, Christian Slater! It's an unexpected joy to see him patrolling the streets in this Jerry Bruckheimer thriller. Slater has acquired a wild-haired gravitas in middle age; his career-long homage to Jack Nicholson has finally reached the *Prizzi's Honor* phase. In *The Forgotten*, he heads a vigilante crew that solves crimes the cops have given up on. The twist: The corpse narrates the episode. Slater's enthusiasm carries the whole show. If you aren't rooting for him to make a major comeback, you probably cheered for Shannen Doherty in *Heathers*.

REASON #33

Ian Somerhalder on 'The Vampire Diaries'

Thursdays, 8 p.m., The CW

The Vampire Diaries is an idea whose time has come - or rather, whose idea came about 45 minutes into *Twilight*. Ian Somerhalder is ideal as the brooding vampire stud with (1) a dark secret and (2) a goody-two-shoes brother who's the kind of vampire that tries not to kill any humans. The show is set in a town called Mystic Falls, and both lads have their eye on the same sweet and innocent girl from the local high school. Yes, you've seen every one of these clichés before, and no, it doesn't matter. Vampire lust is all about blood, not brains. And with Somerhalder, there will be blood by the bucket.

REASON #30

The Musical Numbers on 'Glee'

Wednesdays, 9 p.m., Fox

Is the world ready for more TV about sensitive teens having emotional epiphanies to "Don't Stop Believin'"? Of course! *Glee* is a cross between *High School Musical* and *The Bad News Bears*, as small-town teacher Matthew Morrison reveals his inner choir geek by coaching the glee club at William McKinley High. It seemed like a dodgy idea at first - a dramedy about adolescent show-tune queens, from *Nip/Tuck* creator Ryan Murphy? But the talent on *Glee* is the real deal: Morrison and head songbird Lea Michele are both Broadway stars, and there's a welcome mean-teacher role for Jane Lynch, so brilliant as the lesbian dog trainer in *Best in Show*. Just as you don't have to give a crap about football to love *Friday Night Lights*, you can enjoy *Glee* no matter how deaf you are to the charms of a cappella. The musical numbers are camp as Christmas and proud of it - mixing showstoppers from *Cabaret* and *Wicked* with reinterpretations of Beyoncé - which is why they're so genuinely uplifting. Believin' really is the whole point of *Glee*, and the show really doesn't stop.

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REASON #34

The Boss You Love to Hate

PORTIA DE ROSSI MAY BE the best “worst boss” ever. As Veronica Palmer, the ethics-free corporate queen bee on ABC’s underappreciated sitcom *Better Off Ted*, she has one-night stands with her underlings, installs faulty light sensors that fail to recognize black employees and slaps people to relieve stress. “She’s cold and relentless,” de Rossi says with a laugh. “Kind of the opposite

Better Off Ted Check listings, ABC

of Tina Fey on *30 Rock*.” And yet de Rossi – who established herself as the samurai of eyebrow-cocking and deadpan delivery on the late, lamented *Arrested Development* – somehow makes this callous, money-hungry power-suit drone hilarious. Whether she’s force-feeding her sister so she’ll weigh less than her or battling her father, a rival CEO, over product ideas, you kind of want to give Veronica a hug. “There’s a fine line between being insensitive and being bitchy, and bitchy just isn’t as funny to me,” says de Rossi. “But I did really enjoy slapping everyone across the face.”

M.M.

BETTER OFF PORTIA
“She’s cold and relentless,” de Rossi says of Veronica.



REASON #35

The Next Rerun of ‘Road House’

What’s the most-shown movie on TV? That’s right: It’s *Road House*. According to Nielsen, the 1989 trash classic, with Patrick Swayze as the barroom bouncer who redefines the art of kicking losers in the face, played 45 times in the past year on

A&E, AMC and CMT. It’s always on somewhere, and although it might not be your first pick as the great American epic, the more late-night tequila binges you spend watching it, the more it seems to perfectly encapsulate everything great

about this nation of ours. It’s like *Kung Fu*, with Swayze as the NYU philosophy major who drifted into ass-whopping as a sacred calling, speaking in proverbs like “Pain don’t hurt.” As the bouncer at the Double Deuce, he rules a cast of characters that’s a sleazebag microcosm of TV culture: pro wrestler Terry Funk, punk-rock god John Doe, Elvis flunky Red West, indie-film

legend Ben Gazzara and *Lebowski* narrator Sam Elliott as Swayze’s mentor. The omnipresence of *Road House* testifies to the glory of TV – a place where anything and everything is available at all times, where endless junk reruns feed into the great chain of existence, where you’re never more than a few clicks away from the comforting, ass-kicking presence of Sensei Swayze. R.S.

Patrick Swayze kicks ass, 24/7.



FROM TOP: BRIAN BOWEN SMITH/AUGUST; © UNITED ARTISTS/EVERETT COLLECTION



BORED TO DEATH
Schwartzman, Danson
and Galifianakis (from
left) on the case

REASON #36

TV's Strangest Private Eye

JASON SCHWARTZMAN ALWAYS wanted to be a detective. Long before he signed on to play a budding gumshoe in HBO's *Bored to Death*, this fall's best new comedy, his favorite movies were private-eye flicks: François Truffaut's *Stolen Kisses* and Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye*. So when Schwartzman heard that author Jonathan Ames was writing a TV pilot about a sad-sack amateur investigator, he did what Philip Marlowe would have done: He tracked Ames down. "He sent me the script, and I drove around Los Angeles in the rain while my girlfriend read it to me," Schwartzman says. "It was so good, we had to pull over. I totally connected with this character."

Schwartzman's deadpan anti-hero in *Bored to Death* is a twentysomething ver-

sion of the eccentric teenager he played in Wes Anderson's *Rushmore*. As Jonathan Ames, Schwartzman smokes too much pot, drinks too much white wine, parties too much with his editor (a scene-stealing Ted Danson) and commiserates with Ray (Zach Galifianakis), a comic-book artist who sometimes neglects to wear pants. Half-drunk and reading a Dashiell Ham-

Bored to Death Sept. 20, 9:30 p.m., HBO

mett novel, Jonathan decides to put an ad on Craigslist offering his services as a private eye, and he soon finds himself searching for a young woman's missing sister. From there, the clients only get weirder - Kristen Wiig, Parker Posey and Jim Jarmusch all make inspired cameos. "There's

an episode that's set at a colon hygienist, and one where Jonathan hits his editor in the mouth in order to hide his herpes blister," Schwartzman says. "Where else on TV can you watch me punch Ted Danson?"

But the real reason to watch *Bored to Death* is the way Schwartzman and Galifianakis make you cringe as they make you laugh. "Jonathan isn't a joke - he's a good guy," says Schwartzman. "It's just that the harder he tries to do the right thing, the more trouble he causes. But he really does want to save people. Everyone wants to be heroic." And that includes Schwartzman himself. "They told me I'd get to make out with women and fight other men and break down doors in this role," he says. "And I got really excited. Finally, I get to break down a door!"

M.M.

REASON #37

The Creepy Thrills of 'Fringe'

The year's Most Shocking Season Finale award goes to *Fringe*, the sci-fi thriller from J.J. Abrams. Hunky genius Peter Bishop died as a kid - but his doppelgänger is alive! And he's living in an alternate reality created by his dad's botched science

experiments! And there's a portal to another dimension in which JFK is still alive! Not since *The Twilight Zone* has a twist ending inspired so many goosebumps. "It felt exactly like the kind of thing Rod Serling would have done," Abrams says. "*The Twilight Zone*

and *X-Files* cast a long shadow, but what sets our show apart is that *Fringe* deals not just with the supernatural or alien beings but with what may be technologically possible in the near future." This season, Abrams promises more "shocking

revelations" about Peter and his dad - as well as "something we didn't really touch upon last year: romance."

M.M.

Fringe Thursdays, 9 p.m., Fox

WHAT I LIKE
AZIZ ANSARI
PARKS AND RECREATION



'Breaking Bad'

In this economy, everyone has thought about starting a meth lab, so maybe we need *Breaking Bad* to show us why that might not be a good idea. It's definitely the most intense show I've ever seen. In the very first shot, you see this guy in his underwear driving an RV with two guys in the back who are high on crystal meth. You're like, "Whoa - what happened to the dad from *Malcolm in the Middle*?"



Fringe's
weird
science

FROM TOP: PAUL SCHIRALDI/HBO; LIANE HENTSCHEV/FOX; ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO



DR. FEELGOOD
"I love going to the Playboy Mansion with my boyfriend," says Harris.

REASON #38

Watching Little Doogie Grow Up

NEIL PATRICK HARRIS RECLINES on a green couch in his dressing room, reflecting on the scheming cad he plays on *How I Met Your Mother*. As Barney Stinson, the show's hard-drinking womanizer, Harris has elevated boorish behavior to new heights, at least for network TV. "I like Barney because you're acting with ferocity," Harris says. "He's very Red Bull-ish. He's one of the rare TV parts that has his own universe, own vocabulary, own sense of amusement. He's not supernerd. His whole angle is that he thinks he's awesome." He crosses his legs. "Plus I get to

How I Met Your Mother Sept. 21, 8 p.m., CBS

wear suits, flirt a lot and drink a lot. We drink so much on the show that my knee-jerk reaction to telling a punch line is to take a sip of scotch. I'm not surprised we haven't won any awards for family values."

Harris himself started out as the poster boy for family values, starring as the bland and well-adjusted Doogie Howser, M.D. "Lots of people come up to me and say, 'I know you must hate this, but I loved Doogie,'" he says. "They're like, 'Ooh, you must hate the D-word.'" He shakes his head. "Now, why would I hate that?" Still, when the show ended in 1993, breaking out of the D-mold proved tough. "Up-and-coming moviemakers wanted to hire the next cool thing," Harris recalls. "And unfortunately, Doogie wasn't the coolest guy."

Almost 20 years later, Harris has reinvented himself as one of TV's most unpredictable actors. He sings! He dances! He performs magic! He killed as a guest host on *Saturday Night Live*, is one of the replacements for Paula Abdul on *Idol*, served as host – or "traffic controller in a suit," as he puts it – of this year's Tony Awards and is set to MC this year's Emmys. "Neil's timing is letter-perfect and entirely idiosyncratic," says Joss Whedon, who directed Harris in the online musical *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*. "The guy trains at every aspect of his work, and it gives him ridiculous precision, which he then twists to make every line his own. He might be a funnybot."

The son of two lawyers and "anti-stage parents," Harris won his first role at age five, as Toto in *The Wizard of Oz*, followed by parts in the chorus of his Episcopalian church and playing xylophone in the band. ("It was all sort of *Guffman*," he says.) His

dream was to become a "freaky clown in Cirque du Soleil," but he wound up clinching the part of Doogie. Being TV's nerdiest 16-year-old wasn't easy. "The *90210* kids were cool then, going to all the clubs on Sunset Boulevard, and I wanted to do that too," Harris says. "I had a Polo tie and acne, but I still got a fake ID and hit the town with Stephen Dorff in his BMW."

After touring with the musical *Rent* in 1997, Harris decided to come out as gay to his family. "In *Rent*, I really got to witness people embracing their entirety with boundless joy, and I had never seen that as a possibility," he says. "When I stopped inhibiting myself by dwelling in the crazy scrutiny of my TV past, I was able to express who I felt I was." In 2006, in a move that many consider to be a pivotal moment in the cultural embrace of gay rights, Harris came out to the public – and saw his career get *better*. "Some of the people who say that about me put an asterisk by my name, saying that I was already an established actor," says Harris. "But, that being said, I've been pleasantly surprised by the lack of professional reverberations."

This is the way Harris talks: He's a little stiff and old-timey, though he can throw out a crass line when you least expect it. His dressing room is meticulously decorated, with an eggplant quilt folded in thirds on the couch, a stocked bar and lithographs of magic acts on the walls. An amateur magician and "old-school variety-arts fan," Harris collects vintage magic props and lives for Halloween. "I love going to the Playboy Mansion party with my boyfriend," he says. "Last year, we got dressed up as dead foppish Brits with topcoats and white contact lenses. These naked girls on Ecstasy kept coming up to us, like, 'We love your contacts.' We'd twirl around and say, 'Well, we like your breasts!'"

If Harris had it his way, compliments like these would abound at this year's Emmys (not to mention cats on a tight-rope and a man eating light bulbs). "We will have water-cooler moments, but I'm adamant about not humiliating people," he says. "If you're dressed up for an award, you don't need a jackass host making fun of you." Maybe because of his own past, Harris doesn't go in for cheap digs. "I'm proud of never becoming an Urkel punch line," he says. "I'm very much enjoying being approved of."

VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

REASON #39

The Most Psychedelic TV Since 'H.R. Pufnstuf'

Nick Jr.'s trippy kiddie sensation *Yo Gabba Gabba!* gives you that brain-melting-all-over-your-face feeling you used to get from inhaling Magic Markers – accompanied by a host of musical guests from Biz Markie to the Shins.

REASON #40

The Endless Teen Angst on MTV's 'True Life'

After 11 years, this show still finds new adolescent nightmares to exploit. Every time you think they've hit rock bottom – Crystal meth! Tourette's! Binge drinking! – they come up with something like "I'm a Sumo Wrestler."

REASON #41

Sir Ian McKellen on 'The Prisoner'

In this AMC remake of the paranoia-packed 1960s sci-fi classic, Sir Ian brings all his dry-witted Gandalfian intensity to the role of Number Two, the dapper villain in a futuristic prison camp. "There is no out," he intones. "There is only . . . in."

REASON #42

Scary Pack Rats

Once you watch a lady on the reality show *Hoarders* who can't throw away rotting meat, you'll toss the Masters of the Universe action figures cluttering up your mom's basement.

WHAT I LIKE JAY LENO THE JAY LENO SHOW



'Lost'

I find most TV shows now are better than most movies. You watch *G.I. Joe* or *Watchmen*, and it's just things blowin' up. Then you watch a show like *Lost*, and at least it's not insulting to your intelligence – you actually have to follow it. It's kinda like a Dickens novel, with the way it jumps all over the place. All these crazy things happen on the island, and I don't question anything. But then they find a Volkswagen bus that's been parked in the jungle for 30 years, and somehow they turn the key and the bus starts right up. Now, I can suspend disbelief only so far. Time travel I have no problem with. Moving an entire island by pushing a wheel? No problem. But the car starting with a battery that's been dead for 30 years? No, impossible.

REASON #43

The Golden Age of Green TV

A few years ago, a TV show about composting would have attracted few viewers beyond Middlebury students and clog-store employees. Now there's an entire network devoted to the environment - Planet Green - and green shows have learned

how to entertain. "You don't have to be deadly serious," says Robert Redford, who pioneered green TV on his Sundance Channel. "You can have fun." Here are seven green shows that prove tree-hugging can be as gripping as *CSI*. JOSH DEAN

Raging Planet

DISCOVERY

The network that defined nature programming faces down Earth's most destructive forces - volcanoes, hurricanes, avalanches, tidal waves - in a series of two-hour specials full of dazzling effects and high-def footage that make you feel the boiling ash and lethal mudflows. This is what the Weather Channel's *Storm Stories* promises but fails to deliver: dramatic scenes of a pissed-off Mother Earth fighting back.

Whale Wars

ANIMAL PLANET

Shaggy-haired eco-pirate Paul Watson and his ragtag crew of volunteers thwart Japanese whalers off the coast of Antarctica. A favorite tactic: lobbing butyric acid at the whalers, which douses the meat in stinking liquid. It's compelling TV, and it's working: Watson says they've cut the whale harvest in half. "This kind of exposure is what's going to end this stuff," he says. "We're probably the only show where the participants want it to go off the air."

Living With Ed

PLANET GREEN

Hollywood's kookiest and most legit environmentalist - Ed Begley Jr. - and his wife, Rachele, attempt to live the greenest life possible in their solar-powered home. They dig up the yard to install gray-water recycling, make toast on their bicycle-powered toaster, visit celebrity friends to preach the



WHALE TALE
Eco-pirates attack a whaler.

gospel, and bicker over pressing environmental issues, like the appropriate length of showers. "I get to work from my house and pick on my wife," Begley says. "It's a dream job."

Into the Pride

ANIMAL PLANET

Dave Salmoni, a "large-predator expert," spends six months living with and attempting to change the behavior of a pride of "problem lions" in Namibia. The stakes are high: If they don't stop killing cows and harassing humans, they'll be euthanized. Like *Grizzly Man* - only with a less horrific ending.

Eco Trip

SUNDANCE CHANNEL

In each episode, dashing "eco-adventurer" David de Rothschild follows the birth and life of a different everyday product, demonstrating how things like cellphones and cotton T-shirts affect the environment.

The Green

SUNDANCE CHANNEL

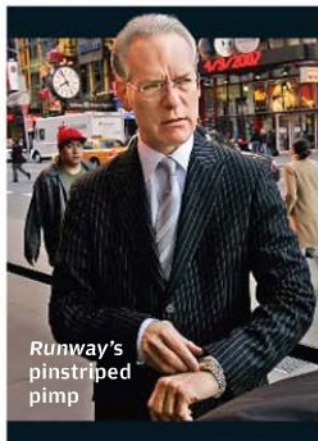
The series that started it all: a different special each week, introduced by Robert Redford. Don't miss "Green Porno," hosted

by Isabella Rossellini, who dons bizarre costumes to explain films of animals humping. This year, she waddles around in a whale outfit, complete with six-foot erect penis.

100 Heartbeats

MSNBC

Host Jeff Corwin aims to do for extinction what Al Gore did for climate change with this two-hour documentary. The title, Corwin explains, refers to "the club you definitely don't want to join" - species with fewer than 100 animals left, some of which may never recover from the damage we've done to the animal world.



Runway's pinstriped pimp

REASON #44

The Suave Mojo of Tim Gunn

He's inspired plenty of imitators, but there's still only one Tim Gunn, the dapper *Project Runway* mentor who never loses his cool, even when the nutty designers around him

are throwing chiffon and slapping their heads against the sewing machines. On a show full of truly damaged fashion queens, Gunn is the silver fox who always looks good in his

suit and always chills everyone out with a question like "Why is there so much *Sturm und Drang*?" This season, the Love Gunn will need to bring all his ramrod charm as the show makes the move to Lifetime, normally the go-to network for old movies where Hilary Swank joins a homicidal sorority. The new

workroom looks the same, and the guest judges - Lindsay Lohan, Eva Longoria Parker - are a nice touch. But the show ultimately rides on Gunn and his "carry on" pep talks to the frazzled-as-ever designers. He's the mack in a world of whickety-whack. R.S.

Project Runway Thursdays, 10 p.m., Lifetime

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I'M CHEVY CHASE Back to school on *Community*.

REASON #45

The New Alec Baldwin

CHEVY CHASE, THE MASTER OF smug-asshole comedy, finally gets a long-awaited comeback in *Community*, a show that gives him a chance to do what he does best, which is belittle everyone around him. Returning to TV after his ill-fated six weeks as host of *The Chevy Chase Show* in 1993, Chase has learned not to venture outside his comfort zone. He plays Pierce Hawthorne, a lecherous old windbag who hangs around the local community college and annoys his fellow students with pompous speeches, racial slurs and inappropriate groping. "There are two things I'm good

Community Sept. 17, 9:30 p.m., NBC

at in comedy," admits Chase. "Being totally on top of everything, like *Fletch*, or being a little behind the curve, like Clark Griswold. But it's fun to play Pierce, because he isn't even on that spectrum. He's just a total clown."

The kick of *Community* is watching Chase go head-to-head with Joel McHale, the best Chevy since Chevy himself. McHale, playing a smug lawyer who returns to school after the bar discovers he faked his college diploma, adopts the spiteful-preppy pose that Chase invented on *SNL*. Between the rookie and the master, *Community* has plenty of squirm-inducing creepiness. "Joel's the star of the show, but I think he sees me as some sort of legend," deadpans Chase. "Honestly, I'm not looking for anything more than to bring some physical comedy to this role – and to knock Joel out and take over." R.S.

WHAT I LIKE

SETH MACFARLANE
FAMILY GUY



'Real Time'

Purely from a comedy standpoint, and setting aside the intelligence of the discourse, *Real Time With Bill Maher* is hands down the funniest show on TV. It surprises me more than any other show

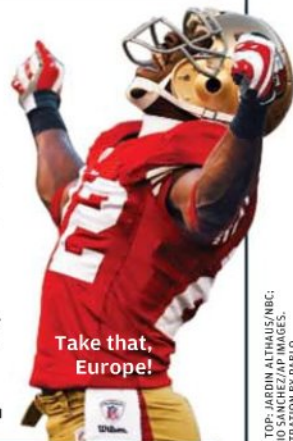
I watch. On other late-night talk shows, the host will sometimes pander to the audience. With Bill, there's no waffling based on popular opinion. He'll be sure to tell his audience to fuck

off if he thinks they're soft. I don't always agree with all of his politics, but he is committed to the power of human reason over superstition and mysticism. To be able to combine fresh intelligence and critical thinking with a cunt joke? No one is able to walk that tightrope as well as Bill.

REASON #46

Football Is All Ours

The best thing about American football is that we haven't been able to sell it to Europe. Which is pretty amazing, when you think of all the shit Europe does buy from us: Church's Chicken, ZZ Top tours, Internet porn featuring baboon-faced sluts from Pasadena. Watching football, the last piece of ourselves we haven't sold, is a patriotic act. So screw the NBA and its billions of fans in China. And screw all those baseball fields in Venezuela, kidnapping capital of the world. Those places don't like football? Good. Because we do. MATT TAIBBI



Take that, Europe!

FROM TOP: JARODN KATHAIE/NBC; MARCO SANCHEZ/AP IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO

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Alexa Chung goofing to the beat



Eddie Trunk honoring guest Ace Frehley



Mos Def on the streets of Osaka, Japan

REASON #47

REASON #48

Ladies Losing Their Shit on 'Real Housewives'

If crazy were french fries, this show would be the Burger King dollar menu. But can the ladies of Atlanta beat Jersey girl Teresa flipping a table at Danielle and screaming, "Prostitution whore!?"

REASON #49

The Dawn of 'Caprica'

For *Battlestar Galactica* devotees, this long-awaited spinoff is the best news since Boomer hooked up with the Chief. Eric Stoltz as the computer wizard who invented Cylons? So say we all!

REASON #50

The Stoner Icing on 'Ace of Cakes'

Until Rachael Ray reveals her secret recipe for pot brownies, *Ace of Cakes* is the only cooking show smart enough to court the nation's hungriest viewers directly. Duff Goldman and his fellow fondant sculptors think like potheads. (Best philosophical moment: The staff argues about which

Music Loosens Up

WHEN DID MUSIC ON TV GET SO good? When it got real. "All my friends want to see more honesty on music shows," says Alexa Chung of *It's On With Alexa Chung*. "If I don't like a band, I can't help but say, 'You're shit.'" Here are three of the best shows for music fans:

EMBEDDED (CURRENT TV) If Animal Planet had a show that captured musicians in their natural habitats, it would look like this refreshingly raw documentary series. Ben Harper gives a tour of his instrument shop in California; Mos Def roams the streets of Osaka, Japan. It's artists in their everyday lives, free of the crowds.

IT'S ON WITH ALEXA CHUNG (MTV) So she's not exactly Katie Couric - that's why

we love her. Being unprofessional makes Chung infinitely watchable: Her guests are so anxious she'll run her goofball caboose off the rails, they answer her honestly rather than reciting stock anecdotes. C'mon, where else on TV will Pete Wentz describe what cobra sperm tastes like?

THAT METAL SHOW (VH1 CLASSIC) It's like *The View*, except hosted by Jersey heshers. Metal guru Eddie Trunk and comedians Jim Florentine and Don Jamieson throw down with the likes of Rush and Twisted Sister, and they grill their guests hard: Lita Ford was even reduced to tears. Plus it's educational: Try *not* to learn something when the audience attempts to "Stump the Trunk" with music trivia. **M.M.**



Duff Goldman on *Ace of Cakes*

is cooler, a break-dancing penguin or a penguin that DJs.) They talk like potheads. ("We're good at making things that look like things," Goldman says.) And all their cakes fall into two categories: (a) stuff potheads dream about (Xbox, *The Big Lebowski*, Girl Scout cookies) and (b) stuff only a pothead could have dreamed up (an armadillo dressed up like an EMT). But what sets the Ace guys apart from the Harolds and Kumars next door is that they belong to that rarest breed of spliff-roller: one with ambition. These guys have career goals, as well as an altruistic streak. They donate a cake to a children's center - only to compare it, on-air, to a bong. "I was like, 'Oh, my God, they got me saying bong on TV,'" Goldman moans. "Everybody is going to think I'm a stoner." **M.M.**

Ace of Cakes
Thursdays, 10 p.m., Food Network



WHAT I LIKE
MATTHEW WEINER
MAD MEN

'The Simpsons'

The Simpsons has been my favorite show for a long time. I started watching it when I still had hair and identified with Bart; now I definitely identify with Homer. I'm impressed with

the fact that it continues to give me pleasure; the quality hasn't diminished over all that time. There's a great mixture of pop-culture references, and yet there's a

timelessness to it - it never feels dated. I watch it with my kids and it reaffirms my philosophy of television, which is that everything doesn't have to be for everyone. There are things I laugh at that they don't, and we both enjoy the show. *The Simpsons* is so American in that it both reaffirms

humanity and kindness and family, and at the same time it's very subversive, because people are often selfish and irresponsible. There's always something that hooks me in, and I always laugh when I watch it. Sometimes out loud, and that's really hard to do - to make someone laugh out loud in their living room.

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A Darker Shade of Pink

She scored her first Number One single and is about to launch her first arena tour. Why does Pink feel like she has so much to prove?

By Gavin Edwards

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CORY WHITE

PINK DANGLES IN THE AIR, UPSIDE DOWN and 25 feet above solid ground. The only thing preventing her from falling and cracking open her skull is a large fishing net wrapped around her body. She writhes and gyrates and executes a perfect split. Her greasy electro-pop tune "Fingers" blasts over the sound system, reverberating in the empty Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne, Australia. The lyrics are about masturbating late at night next to a sleeping lover: "I need more than you are gonna give." Balancing her torso the way the song balances lust and frustration, Pink snaps her legs shut. Then she swings around, slingshots herself out of the net and executes an elegant dismount.

On solid ground, Pink grins and says, "Fan-fucking-tastic! Now I just need to see if I can sing it while I'm

doing that. I'm trying to make the number as sexual as possible but not get my boots caught in the net." She discusses costume options, concluding, "I really need to wear a bikini, and I don't know if I'm ready for it." She protrudes her abdomen so it bulges between her tank top and her black leggings, and caresses her belly like a hungry four-year-old.

"I'm a walking contradiction," Pink likes to say, and she's not wrong. Weeks away from her 30th birthday, she has contempt for the notion of being a pop star but works really hard at being one. She's an avid PETA supporter who wears leather and eats fish. She celebrates her freedom but has "the most regimented schedule of anyone I know." She describes herself as shy, yet she shares intimate details of her life with anybody who turns on the radio: Her 2008 album, *Funhouse*, is basically a diary about the dissolution of her marriage with professional motocross rider Carey Hart. (This year, they got back together.)

At home in the States, *Funhouse*, her fifth record, went platinum behind her first Number One single, the triumphant "So What!" But in Australia, she's way, way bigger: the *Funhouse* tour, which combines her biggest hits with Cirque du Soleil-style aerial acrobatics, has played for an astonishing 58 arena dates, including 17 in Melbourne alone. On September 15th, the tour lands in the United States, where Pink has never headlined arena shows before (although she did serve as an opening act for Justin Timberlake in 2007 and impressed early arrivals by performing "Get the Party Started" while twirling high above the stage). "The best I can gather is that Australia likes their artists to be rugged and raw and authentic, and America likes their artists to be glamorous and a little more packaged and glossy - like the difference between me and Beyoncé," Pink says. "She's beautiful, she's multitalented, and she lives this jet-set lifestyle. And then there's me: You would picture me out in a field boxing a kangaroo with makeup running down my face, crying about something that happened a week ago."

Post-rehearsal, Pink stands onstage with eight musicians, five dancers and one aerialist, giving a play-by-play of the previous evening, when the female performers had a girls' night out. "I thought you were going to wear a skirt and heels so you could come with us," Pink teases French trapeze artist Sebastien Stella. Somehow, the drinking devolved into Twister, and Twister devolved into lying on the floor and talking blow jobs. "The consensus was that you don't have to spit on it before, just go for it," she says. "We'll see when I get home - I have a couple of weeks to think about my strategy." She envisions coming

Contributing editor GAVIN EDWARDS wrote about *Blink-182* in *RS 1085*.

home to her husband: "Carey, get in here! I'll be back from the supermarket in three hours. Be naked!"

Dancer-choreographer Leo Moctezuma sidles up to me. "My boss is cuckoo," he whispers. "But I love her." Cuckoo, maybe - but she's also warm, unaffected, charming and smart. She's capable of contradicting herself within the space of an hour, but she never seems two-faced - it's just that she genuinely believes the opposite of what she used to. Physically, she's smaller than you might guess. "It says five foot five on my driver's license, but that was just my fantasy," she says. "I think I'm five foot three. And right now I'm weighing in at a very strong, diesel 128 pounds."

After a pre-show dinner (salmon, steamed vegetables), the singer returns to her dressing room. The walls have been painted hot pink in honor of her historic run of shows. "I have so much shit in my teeth," she complains, inspecting herself in the mirror. "I have *eyebrows* in my teeth." A stylist arrives with possible wigs for "Stupid Girls," a hilariously bitchy 2006 single about the vacant space behind the eyes of many pop starlets. "Am I going to be Paris or Jessica?" Pink wonders. She channels the inner monologue: "Oh, my God, you guys, I totally had more than 300 calories today! I had a sandwich for lunch, and it's *still* in my tummy!"

Pink, whose career took off at the same time as Britney's and Christina's, has a complicated relationship with the phrase "pop star." "It could be factual, it could be a compliment, it could be demeaning," she says. Her preferred job description is "group therapist." She explains, "My job is to be comfortable enough in my own pain to share it with others and help them. Around the second album, I wasn't singing about boy meets girl, I was singing about divorce and drugs and pain, and I was getting letters that were more devastating than my own story. I just happened to be getting my shit together and holding the microphone."

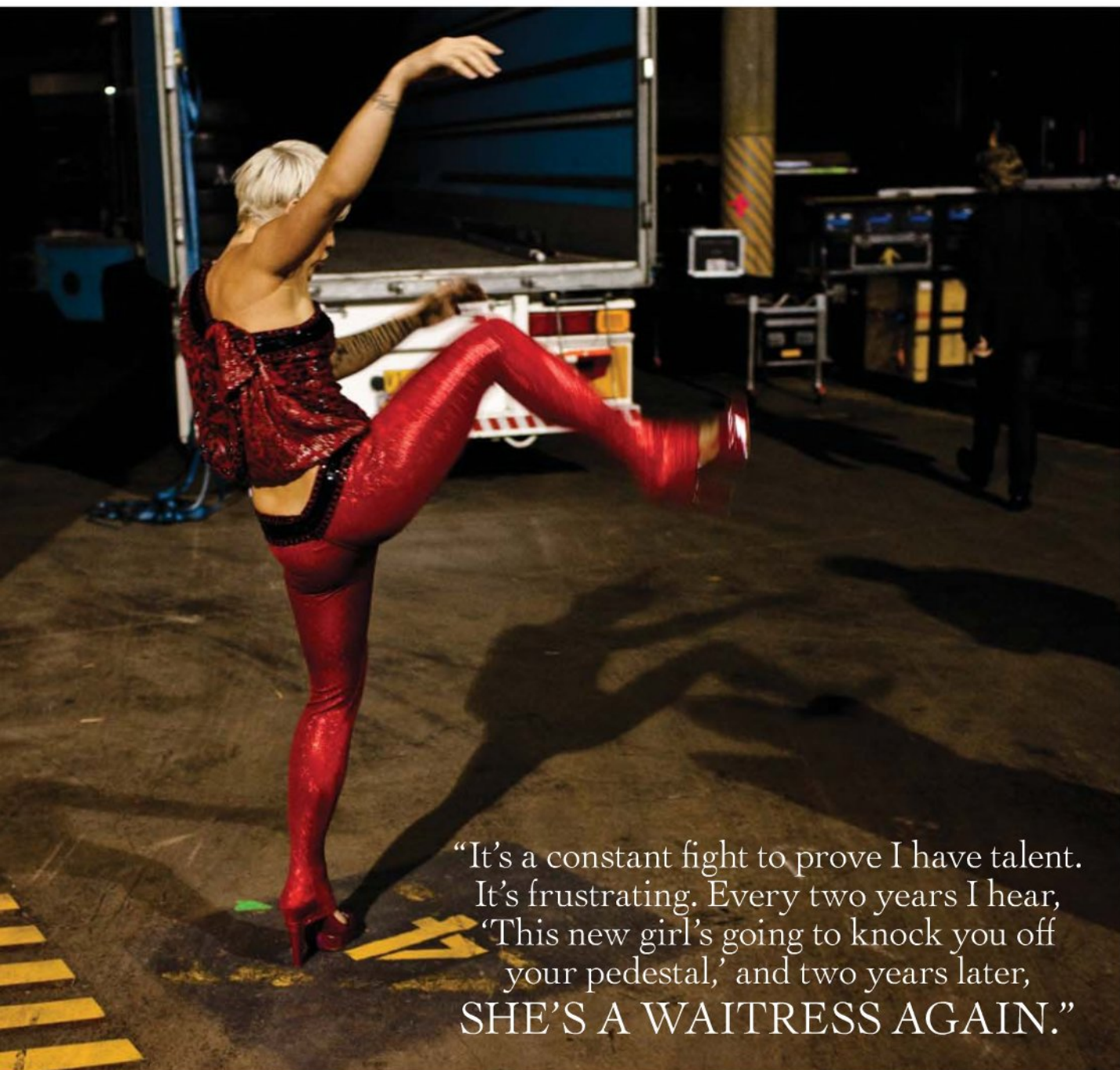
GROWING UP IN THE SUBURBS of Philadelphia, Pink, born Alecia Moore, started smoking when she was nine. "It was fucking cool when I was 12," she says. "But now I'm turning 30, so I've given it up. It's just not that cute anymore." Her parents split when she was seven; Pink nominally stayed with her mother, an ER nurse, but the singer, who by her early teens was gobbling large quantities of acid, Ecstasy and ketamine, kept running away from home. When Pink was 15, her mom finally kicked her out of the house. This ultimately inspired her 2002 hit single "Family Portrait," where she tapped into her childhood anguish, throatily singing, "Can we be a family?/I promise I'll be better/Mommy, I'll do anything." Pink now has a good relationship



with her parents, both of whom have visited her in Australia.

Her original dream was to be an Olympic gymnast - but she got kicked off her team for having "a non-teamlike attitude." "I was trying to explain to my coach that gymnastics was an individual sport," she says. "He didn't agree." She admits now that she probably would never have made it to the Olympics, but through her teens she was able to bust out a killer party trick: doing 18 back-handsprings in a row.

Pink grew up with music: Her dad, a Vietnam vet and insurance salesman, played guitar and wrote songs as a hobby, and she'd sing along. Later, she fell in love with Stone Temple Pilots, Billy Joel and Bad Religion. She especially identified



“It’s a constant fight to prove I have talent. It’s frustrating. Every two years I hear, ‘This new girl’s going to knock you off your pedestal,’ and two years later, SHE’S A WAITRESS AGAIN.”

with Janis Joplin and 4 Non Blondes – who scored a monster hit in 1993 with “What’s Up.” “I wasn’t listening to the lyrics, necessarily,” she recalls, “but I know that pain – that’s *mine*.”

When Pink was 16, she joined the TLC-inspired girl group Choice, which signed to LaFace Records and broke up without releasing an album. Recognizing her as a breakout talent, LaFace head LA Reid signed her to a solo deal. Pink might not have been an alumna of the new *Mickey Mouse Club*, but her 2000 debut album, *Can’t Take Me Home*, released when she was 20, did nothing to set her apart from Britney and Aguilera.

As her solo career began picking up, Pink relocated to Venice, California, and

got an apartment next to an Italian restaurant. “I didn’t have an alarm clock,” she says, “but they played ‘That’s Amore’ every day at 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. That’s the only way I knew the time.” Against the wishes of her label, she picked her new collaborator: 4 Non Blondes leader Linda Perry. The album they wrote together, 2001’s *Missundaztood*, created a new template for pop music: slick dance-floor-ready drum programming, crunchy rock guitars and unusually impassioned vocals with lyrics drawn directly from Pink’s own life. Powered by the single “Get the Party Started,” the album went quintuple-platinum. Back in Venice, people started recognizing Pink, and she had to move to a nicer part of town. “Fame fucked it up,” she says with a shrug.

“She’s raw,” says Perry. “She doesn’t make decisions based on fear. A lot of artists are concerned with what everybody is going to think, where Alecia just does it and worries about it later – if at all. And that’s what makes her a rock star.” The gritty pop sound Pink pioneered was quickly adopted by everyone from Aguilera (who co-wrote her 2002 hit “Beautiful” with Perry) to Avril Lavigne, and more than once, her career has seemed on the verge of washing away. But she’s always managed to bounce back with another hit single. Her songbook covers topics ranging from the failures of the Bush administration (“Dear Mr. President”) to how an unwanted suitor should just masturbate instead (“U + Ur Hand”). She has

sought out a remarkable assortment of songwriting partners: from Rancid's Tim Armstrong and No Doubt's Tony Kanal to Swedish pop genius Max Martin. "I'm not subtle or poetic as a songwriter," Pink says. "But I have my moments." Adds *Funhouse* collaborator Butch Walker, "If I come in with an idea, we pass the lap-top back and forth, and the song is done in five or 10 minutes. You actually can't shut her off."

"I'm the constant underdog in America," Pink says. "It's been this constant fight to prove I have some kind of talent. Every two years I hear, 'Oh, this new girl's going to knock you off your pedestal,' and two years later, she's a waitress again."

BACKSTAGE IN MELBOURNE, Pink attacks her peroxidized hair with a crimping iron as her iPod plays a wide-ranging mix: Stevie Wonder's "My Cherie Amour," Nouvelle Vague's cover of "Too Drunk to Fuck," "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer." (Mercifully, she skips that last one.) While her makeup artist works on her face, Pink gives her advice: "No couple that wants to stay together should ever play Monopoly." Other games are no better in the Pink-Hart household. "Carey cheats at Scrabble," she says. "He gets mad because he doesn't know as many words as me. We can't play anything that requires a winner."

Pink and Hart, who met at the 2001 X Games, had been dating for four years when she proposed to him in the summer of 2005. He was racing in the motocross finals at Mammoth Lakes, California; standing on the sidelines, Pink held up a sign reading, "Will You Marry Me?" The next lap, she held up another sign that read, "I'm serious!" Hart stopped his bike and swept Pink into his arms. They were married in Costa Rica the following January.

From the start, their relationship has had a dangerous edge. "I set my bedroom on fire once!" Pink says. "Carey wanted to have a quickie, and I left a cigarette burning on an oven mitt." Couldn't she have taken a moment to stub it out? She shrugs. "When Carey says 'quickie,' I get excited."

One Thanksgiving, the couple celebrated with Hart's family. "My father-in-law decided to bring three bottles of Patrón," Pink says. After a long afternoon of drinking, she decided that the sweet potatoes would look better on his head. A "total food fight" ensued. When Hart wanted to leave, Pink thought he was too drunk to drive, so she tried to slash his tires but ended up cutting her hand open instead. "Carey had to drive me to the hospital anyway, so my plan backfired," says Pink, who got 13 stitches. She pauses, as if she's looking for a moral to the tale. There doesn't seem to be one. "Oh, well," she concludes.

Pink and Hart kept two separate residences: hers in Los Angeles, his in Las

Pretty in Pink

Pink's latest album is inspired by husband (and motocross pro) Carey Hart (1). As a kid (2), Pink dreamed of becoming an Olympic gymnast - skills she uses on her acrobatic tour (3). Leading a prayer circle backstage in Melbourne (4).



Vegas. They were pushed apart even further by their careers, and on Valentine's Day of last year, they decided to split up. There hadn't been a specific transgression or a final argument. "We were just two tired people," Pink says. "It was years of us being apart and being stubborn. We were like rams, not knowing how *not* to butt heads."

The day the split was announced, Pink was in New York. The first paparazzi that she saw greeted her with "How's the divorce going?" The answer was "Not well." Pink did everything she could to purge the sorrow, including a sweat-lodge ceremony in Arizona. She moved out of her Sherman Oaks house - too many memories - and rented a second home in Malibu. "It was my divorce present to myself," she says. "I was seeing how much money I could flush down the toilet." After five months, she visited her old house late one night. She didn't have a key, so she crawled through the doggy door and then walked around, turning on lights and flinching at all the memories. "I'm a masochist," she says. "I went through our wedding album."

She decided to pour all of the pain into a new record. *Funhouse* - the album she made about the split - kicks off with "So What!": "I guess I just lost my husband," she sings. "I don't know where he went/ So I'm gonna drink my money/I'm not gonna pay his rent." Pink's label wanted

"So What!" to be the first single, but Pink wasn't sure. She worried it would come off as bitter, when it actually came from a complicated roil of emotions. "There's loneliness, there's fear, there's hurt, there's sarcasm, there's empowerment," she says. Finally she relented: She would release it as a single if Hart would agree to be in the video. "It took a lot of convincing," Pink says. When he showed up on the set, it was the first time they had seen each other in six months. "I was nervous," Pink says. "It was 7:00 in the morning, but I had to drink a beer."

When the video wrapped, she played Hart the heartbreak ballad "I Don't Believe You," a testament of faith in their marriage. "It was such an emotional moment for both of us," she says. A month later, they went on a motorcycle trip together, but didn't see each other again for months. Pink went to Las Vegas for New Year's Eve, divorce papers in hand, determined either to get back together or to break things off permanently. That night, she performed at Wasted Space, Hart's nightclub at the Hard Rock. "He told me he couldn't live without me, and I told him to tell me in the morning," Pink says. "And when we woke up, he pulled me over and said, 'It's morning - I love you.'" They've been together since. When Hart, who joined the Australian tour for a while, performing motocross stunts in the parking

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF PINK; KIRSTY UMBACK/CORBIS; RICHARD BEETHAM/SPLASH NEWS



“I wasn’t singing about boy meets girl – I was singing about divorce, drugs. My job is to be comfortable enough in my own pain to
SHARE IT WITH OTHERS AND HELP THEM.”

lot before shows, was recently asked about their future, he predicted that they’d have children. “Ten years down the road, hopefully I’ll be moto’ing or surfing with my kids and wife and relaxing. She’s my best friend *and* my wife. I got lucky there.”

“There’s still wounds,” Pink says. “But that’s how we heal them – we pour salt in them. Does that still hurt? Just checking. Does the lemon hurt? Love you, baby. Let’s try sandpaper next time.” I ask Pink what they’re doing to avoid situations like her tequila-soaked assault on Hart’s tires. She looks at me as if I’ve completely missed the point. Grinning, she says, “There’s nothing wrong with *passion*.”

THE PINK SHOW KICKS OFF with “Bad Influence,” an up-tempo ditty about how Pink’s friends use her presence as an excuse to overimbibe. Like many of her best songs, it’s exuberant, catchy and a little melancholy. Pink makes her entrance through a trapdoor, clinging to a rope. As she floats over the stage, singing, “I can’t help it, I like to

party/It’s genetic,” she trails a 20-foot feather boa behind her. The set list omits her first album but includes an eclectic bunch of covers: AC/DC’s “Highway to Hell,” Gnarl Barkley’s “Crazy,” “Babe I’m Gonna Leave You” and “Bohemian Rhapsody” don’t really add much in the way of interpretation, but Pink belts the hell out of them, demonstrating that her vocal abilities compare favorably to the prodigious gifts of Robert Plant and Freddie Mercury. Halfway through, Pink stops the action for an acoustic interlude that includes quiet takes on “I Don’t Believe You” and “Trouble.” “Don’t clap along,” she warns the audience as she straps on an acoustic guitar. “I’m not good enough to keep time.”

After the show, she’s amped to hit the town. “The demons start talking late at night: ‘Come play with us,’” she hisses. When she finally gets to sleep, around 4 a.m., she has disturbing nightmares. One recent example: “I got the back of my head shot off, and I was trying to put newspapers in to keep my brains in.” When she arrives at the arena around five

the next day, she’s subdued. “I skipped the gym and had a cry,” she says quietly. “Just bullshit at home. I hadn’t had one of those days in a while, so I was probably due.”

Her bad mood fuels her performance (“I had forgotten how anger can power a show,” she says afterward). She adds “Dear Mr. President,” her open letter to George W. Bush, to the acoustic segment. She hadn’t performed it this year; she didn’t want people to think its bile was directed at Obama. The final number is “Glitter in the Air,” a ballad about surrendering to love. While Pink sings, three of her dancers spin overhead, clinging to sashes. Then Pink is hoisted beneath them in a silky white hammock before being lowered through a trapdoor into a tank of water. When the rigging crew lifts her back up, she’s soaking wet. Metaphorically reborn, Pink floats and spins over the stage, scattering water everywhere. “That’s my favorite moment,” says dancer-choreographer Alison Faulk. “When she comes out of the water, she smiles at us, and she finally gets to relax. It sounds silly, but it’s good seeing her happy.”



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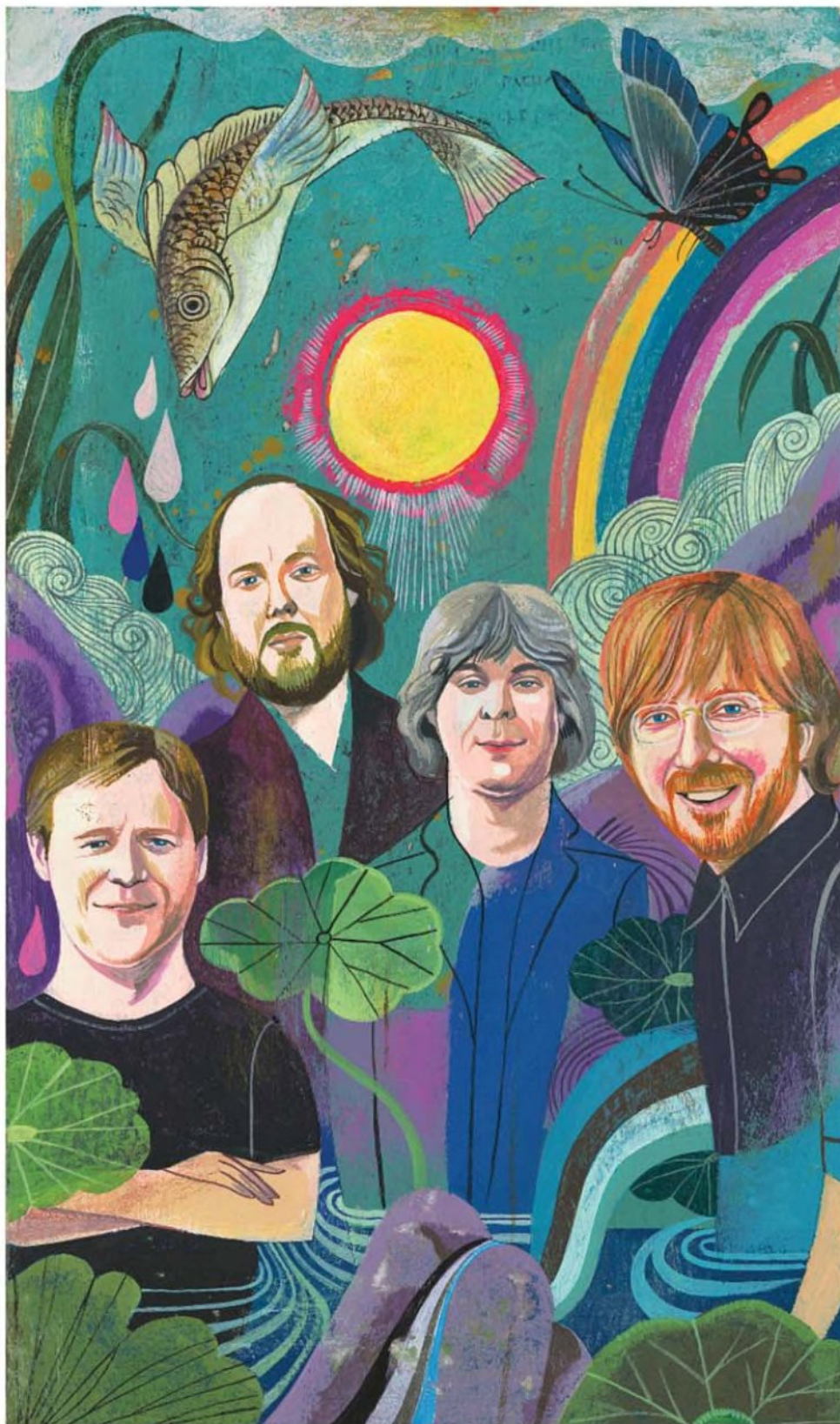
Reviews

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Prodigal jam band returns with scars – and its best album yet

Phish ★★★★★

Joy *JEMP*

BY WILL HERMES



PHISH TURNED 25 last November quietly; after all, they'd been defunct for over

four years. So consider their reunion LP, the self-released *Joy*, a belated birthday party. "Happy happy, oh my friend/ Blow out candles once again" sings Trey Anastasio on the nostalgic opener, "Backwards Down the Number Line." It's the epitome of a Phish song, complete with bouncy country-rock groove, merrily cryptic chorus and immaculately ecstatic guitar solo. And it leads off an unlikely gift: a genuinely great album from a touring phenomenon not known for great albums.

Funny thing about birthdays, though: At a certain point, they become not merely celebrations but occasions for reflection and even regret. The latter elements are what make *Joy* – despite a fair amount of joyfulness – a deeper trip than most Phish LPs. To a large extent the set reads as *The Redemption of Trey Anastasio*, who wrote most of the songs with longtime lyricist Tom Marshall. The frontman spent a portion of the band's hiatus battling addiction and the fallout from a drug arrest, and the lyrics frequently feel confessional. "I was doing the best that I can, I suppose," he sings on the wistful title track, clearly aware that it wasn't enough. In the lilting "Twenty Years Later," the singer is "still upside-down" after decades

of recklessness. And on the I-will-survive rocker "Stealing Time From the Faulty Plan" – in a couplet sure to launch a thousand Facebook status updates – Anastasio declares, "Got a blank space where my mind should be/Got a Clif Bar and some cold green tea." He sounds more exhausted than enlightened.

Yet the music feels anything but beaten. The set reunites Phish with Steve Lillywhite, who produced 1996's *Billy Breathes* (their best studio set until now), and he perfectly balances studio detailing with the band's live whoosh. The playing is marvelously at ease and in sync. Bassist Mike Gordon, like kindred spirits Phil Lesh and John Entwistle, sets up rubbery counter-melodies inside the grooves. Page McConnell's piano arpeggios swarm like fireflies; drummer Jon Fishman keeps the rhythms shifting, light and playful. And Anastasio plays his balls off, spinning a sweet Caribbean melody on the metareggae "Sugar Shack" and ripping out raw blues licks on "Kill Devil Falls," a boogie-till-you-puke number whose title works as a metaphor for overindulgence ("Just got back from Kill Devil Falls/Draped my waterlogged clothes in the hall"). The double-crested solo of "Backwards Down the Number Line," which bows to Jerry Garcia, is a strong contender for Anastasio's sweetest studio moment ever.

Even on the multipart, 13-minute "Time Turns Elastic" – Phish's own "Terrapin Station" – there's none of the overreaching that's undercut the band's past work. Overall, *Joy* seems less about ambition than about generosity – specifically to the group's devoted fans. As Anastasio pledges on the title track, "We want you to be happy, 'cause this is your song too."

If you can't enjoy *Joy*, you will probably never enjoy Phish. Yet, to paraphrase a vintage Phish song, what's most impressive here is how much they seem to be enjoying themselves – truly, deeply, gratefully. It's nice to have them back.

Key Tracks: "Backwards Down the Number Line," "Sugar Shack"

Getting Better All the Time

A monster remastering project finally does the Fab Four CDs justice for the digital age

The Beatles ★★★★★ REISSUE

The Beatles *Apple Corps Ltd./Capitol*



AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW BY NOW, the remastering of the Beatles catalog was carried out with the caution of translating the Dead Sea Scrolls. Happily, the results justify the obsessive care. These 14 stereo remasters – from *Please Please Me* (1963) to *Let It Be* (1970), with a two-disc *Past Masters* added for good measure – make the original

recordings sound newly invigorated and alive, whether you're listening on standard earbuds or a high-end system.

An enormous effort was made to stay true to the original mixes, so there aren't going to be any easy revelations for Beatles fans. Instead, these albums sound deeper, richer and fleshed-out. The buoyancy of "Something" becomes more comprehensible when you hear clearly Paul McCartney's nimble bass line. You knew that "Twist and Shout" featured one of John Lennon's most visceral performances, but here you can feel his vocal cords shred. The horns on "Good Morning Good Morning" roar, driving the song in a way you may not have noticed before. Lennon and George Harrison's guitars on "You Can't Do That" sharpen to a gleaming edge.

One tip for deep-pocketed fans: The 12-CD *The Beatles in Mono* box set is more than a collector's indulgence. The warmth and punch of early albums *With the Beatles* and *Beatles for Sale* evoke the experience of first hearing songs like "All My Loving" on the original vinyl. But in stereo or mono, these albums have finally received the treatment they deserve.

ANTHONY DECURTIS

Key Tracks: "Something," "Twist and Shout"



PERFECT SOUND, FINALLY McCartney, Harrison, Ringo Starr, Lennon at Twickenham Film Studios in 1969

Kid Cudi ★★★

Man on the Moon: The End of Day

Universal Motown/GOOD Music

The age of emo rap has officially arrived



KANYE WEST'S *808s & Heartbreak* seemed like a wacky one-off, but with the debut

by Kanye protégé Kid Cudi, a genre is taking shape. "I've got some issues that nobody can see/And all of these emotions are pouring out of me," Cudi moans. The beats, supplied by indie faves Ratatat and MGMT, among others, range from tinkling Eighties synth pop ("Enter Galactic") to spooky minimalist hip-hop (the hit "Day 'N' Nite"). The music is engrossing and Cudi's angst genuine (he mourns his dead father), but his raps get pedestrian ("Gray clouds up above, man/Metaphor to my life, man"). And asserting ad nauseam that he is a "lonely stoner" is just annoying – a hipster boast masquerading as a confession.

JODY ROSEN

Key Tracks: "Day 'N' Nite," "Make Her Say"

Third Eye Blind

★★★★

Ursa Major *Mega Collider*

"Semi-Charmed Life" hitmakers age semigracefully



IN THE LATE Nineties, Third Eye Blind worked up a shiny version of college rock

that was verbose, deep-feeling and catchy enough to keep most haters at bay. On their first album in six years, Stephan Jenkins is still prone to heavy-handed lyrics and a certain type of alt-guy cheese, getting whiny and wordy on songs like "Why Can't You Be." But he still has a way with uplifting pop-rock choruses like the one on "Can You Take Me," the album's hard-charging opener. Dotted with spry little riffs and Jenkins' pseudo raps, *Ursa Major* is a slick but heart-felt disc that packs pleasure even if you're not Nineties-nostalgic.

CHRISTIAN HOARD

Key Tracks: "Can You Take Me," "Water Landing"

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differently
leads to
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exceptional*

**THE ABSOLUT
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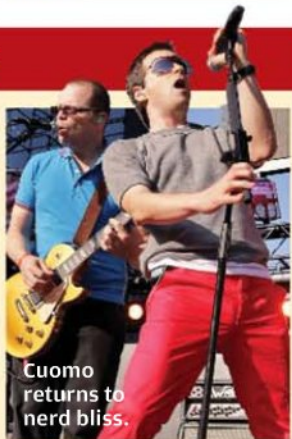
TOP SINGLES

Weezer ★★★★★

“(If You’re Wondering If I Want You To) I Want You To”

weezer.com

Rivers Cuomo can be so cranky and ironic that even people who like cranky irony can get a little frustrated with him. But the first official single from Weezer’s seventh record (due in October) is a return to nerd-rock bliss. Rivers bites the Jam’s “Town Called Malice” and knocks out a beautifully inept marriage proposal. He’s a sheepish vegetarian, she’s a gothy metal chick, and even the most awkward meet-the-parents moment since Vincent Gallo and Christina Ricci in



Cuomo returns to nerd bliss.

Buffalo ‘66 can’t dampen the romantic fire in his yellow belly. Fifteen years down the line from “Buddy Holly,” Cuomo can still kick out the poetry of incapacity with grace and empathy.

JON DOLAN

Thom Yorke ★★★★★

“All for the Best”

Leaked

This jangle-rock ballad was a close-but-not-quite hit from the Eighties indie troupers Miracle Legion, whose singer Mark Mulcahy gets the tribute-album treatment on the benefit comp *Ciao My Shining Star: The Songs of Mark Mulcahy*. Thom Yorke turns the oldie into a glitch-ridden electronic lament, full of stark, cold-eyed beauty.

ROB SHEFFIELD

Chris Brown ★

“Changed Man”

Leaked

Brown acts all sheepish here (why is he hiding behind Auto-Tune?), but the threat implicit in this tune’s “It ain’t over” refrain smacks of abusive-pattern behavior, not love. If this treacly piece of pop pap – complete with tender acoustic fingerpicking and three self-pitying refs to *Everybody Hates Chris* – persuades “baby” to keep Brown around, expect the worst.

PETER RELIC

The Drums ★★★★★

“Let’s Go Surfing”

myspace.com/the drumsforever

Brooklyn’s hot band-of-the-second effortlessly mixes two disparate styles – Joy Division’s brooding, post-punk vibe and a strong dose of Dick Dale – into a jumpy, three-minute jam that’s catchier than H1N1. For maximum hook factor, they toss in a whistle-happy chorus that’s nearly as infectious as Peter Bjorn and John’s “Young Folks.” Grab your long board and dive in. KEVIN O’DONNELL

Karen O and the Kids ★★★★★

“All Is Love”

All major services

The omnipresent trailer for Spike Jonze and Dave Eggers’ *Where the Wild Things Are* (check the *Everybody Poops* parody on YouTube!) blasts Arcade Fire’s great “Wake Up.” This preview of the film’s Karen O soundtrack – campfire guitar strumming, rowdy kids’ choir and falsetto chanting – is nearly as rousing.

WILL HERMES

Ke\$ha ★★★★★

“TiK ToK”

All major services

Ke\$ha – best known as the chick who sang on Flo Rida’s “Right Round” – snagged producer Dr. Luke for the hyperkinetic first single off her forthcoming debut. With dance-floor-beckoning electro pulses and bad-girl confessions – she brushes her teeth with a bottle of Jack and disses boys who don’t look like Mick Jagger – Ke\$ha is likely to give Lady Gaga a run for her money.

NICOLE FREHSE

Selena Gomez and the Scene ★★★★★

“Falling Down”

All major services

Fresh off Disney’s pop-star conveyor belt, Gomez offers a glimpse of her upcoming debut with this energetic rant against the glamorous life. The guitar-heavy chorus is catchy, but neither production tricks nor wizardry can mask her pedestrian voice – or the predictable lyrics. SARENE LEEDS

Trey Songz

★★★★½

Ready *Songbook*/Atlantic

Virginia smoothie takes the R. Kelly mode one step beyond



TREY SONGZ

likes sex. But he loves sex farce. On his third album, this smoothie from Virginia – one of R&B’s nimblest vocalists – takes cues from R. Kelly, slyly mocking the self-parodying excesses of bouidior R&B while supplying the utilitarian goods: the sumptuous vocal harmonies and sultry beats upon which long nights beneath ceiling mirrors depend. Songz enrages his neighbors with loud “banging”; boasts, “I invented sex”; and explores the erotics of emoticons in what may be the year’s best-titled song, “LOL :-).” The “Purple Rain”-like power ballad “Yo Side of the Bed” shows that Songz can be awfully good when he plays it straight. But he’s great when he delivers the LOLZ. JODY ROSEN

Key Tracks: “Panty Droppa (Intro),” “Neighbors Know My Name”

Mason Jennings

★★★★★

Blood of Man *Brushfire*

Faith-based Minneapolis protest singer goes electric



WHAT MAKES

Mason Jennings one of the best acoustic-based singer-songwriters you’ve never heard of is his ragged, intimate voice and simple ruminations on God, war, hope and gratitude. On his best album yet, Jennings goes much darker, with chilling tales of addiction, madness and loss, all wrapped up in fuzzy electric guitars, feedback and raw, distorted vocals. “Pittsburgh” is a straightforward, Lou Reed-ish story-song about a teenage breakdown, and “The Field,” with its primal scream on the line “I don’t want no victory, I just want you back,” may be the most moving anti-war song ever written from a parent’s perspective.

MARK KEMP

Key Tracks: “Pittsburgh,” “Ain’t No Friend of Mine”

The Feelies REISSUE

Crazy Rhythms ★★★★★½

The Good Earth ★★★★★

Bar/None

The band that taught indie rockers how to strum



THESE SUB-urban guitar geeks nailed their sound in 1980 with *Crazy Rhythms* “Raised Eyebrows”: two post-punk guitars chopping up a jagged surf riff, weird

percussion clatter, tension building until it all explodes into a climactic power-strum rave with three dudes yelping, “The glory, glory, oh, oh!” in incoherent joy. *Rhythms* remains an indie-rock landmark, but the less famous *Good Earth* is every bit as crucial, with the hypnotic drones of songs like “Slipping (Into Something).” Reissues bonus: fantastic covers of the Beatles’ “She Said She Said” and Neil Young’s “Sedan Delivery.”

R.S.

Key Tracks: “Raised Eyebrows,” “Let’s Go”

BUY THESE NOW

Arctic Monkeys

Humburg *Domino*

Alex Turner and his fellow Brit punks escape their humdrum town and go into the desert with Josh Homme of Queens of the Stone Age; heavy rock thunder ensues.

La Roux

La Roux *Cherrytree*

Elly Jackson is the perfect London dance-pop star of the moment – a 21-year-old bossypants with appallingly awesome hair and a vacant stare of a voice. Key line: “I’m not turned on to love until it’s cheap” (“Bulletproof”).

Black Crowes

Before the Frost... / Until the Freeze...

Silver Arrow

Chris and Rich Robinson throw a party in Levon Helm’s barn and come out with two great roots albums: the ragged, rocking *Frost* and the sweet, acoustic *Freeze*.

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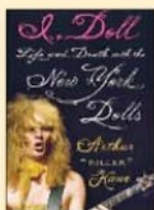
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REVIEWS MUSIC

BOOKS



DOLLMAKING The Dolls' Jerry Nolan, Sylvain Sylvain, David Johansen, Johnny Thunders and Arthur Kane (from left), 1974



I, Doll: Life and Death With the New York Dolls

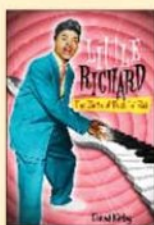
★★★★

By Arthur "Killer" Kane

Chicago Review Press

This biting, confessional memoir, left by Kane, the campy Dolls bassist who died of leukemia in 2004, details the dizzying first 16 months of the cross-dressing protopunk band. Just as important, he nails the Dolls' special knack for turning something visual – like B-horror-movie images – into something musical, and excoriates both Kiss and Lou Reed. This is rocking stuff for androgynes everywhere.

COLIN FLEMING



Little Richard: The Birth of Rock 'n' Roll ★★½

By David Kirby Continuum Publishing

In Kirby's book, Elvis and Chuck Berry are milquetoasts next to Little Richard: The former Richard Penniman channeled Baudelaire, hard bop and juke-joint hoodoo, and invented rock & roll in two and a half minutes with "Tutti Frutti." Everyone from Wagner to Poe factors into Florida State English professor Kirby's rejiggering of rock's canon; even if you're not completely convinced, the Georgia Peach is well and truly buffed.

c.f.

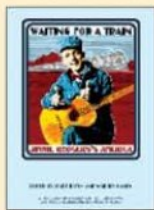


Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music ★★★★★

By Greg Milner Faber & Faber

Finding out how your favorite music gets recorded is dangerous, like learning the ingredients of your lunch. But that's the kick of this brilliant study. Music journo Milner digs into the details of studio trickery, with engineers talking about the drum solo from Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" the way nuclear physicists discuss the Manhattan Project. Scary!

ROB SHEFFIELD



Waiting for a Train: Jimmie Rodgers's America

★★★★

Edited by Mary E. Davis and Warren Zanes Rounder Books

Rodgers still isn't as famous as, say, Hank Williams, but 80 years ago his mix of hillbilly, blues and Tin Pan Alley formed the blueprint for modern country. These 24 essays – ranging from Bob Dylan's musings to hard academic analysis – explain why Rodgers' music runs deep in America's veins.

MARK KEMP

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Muse ★★★

The Resistance Warner Bros.
Art rockers gin up huge sound, but something's missing



MANY ART ROCKERS have symphonic pretensions, but it takes gumption to compose a "symphony." Enter Muse: The British trio's fifth album closes with "Exogenesis: Symphony," a three-part suite full of grandiose orchestral swells and lyrical koans like "Why are we? Who are we?" Muse's humongous cresting and tumbling songs have earned them a massive cult following, along with criticism that the band sounds a little too much like its heroes. (Frontman Matthew Bellamy has a serious Thom Yorke fixation.) Songs like the industrial-flavored "Uprising" prove again that Muse know how to whip up an almighty roar. But the lyrics are pompous doggerel ("Coercive notions revolve/A universe is trapped inside a tear"), and they borrow shamelessly from Radiohead and Queen without the former's musical invention or the latter's cheeky swagger. Ultimately, *The Resistance* is a patchwork of expert clichés that leaves a listener wondering just what the point of Muse is. Why are they? Who are they?

JODY ROSEN

Key Tracks: "Uprising," "I Belong to You"

VIDEO GAMES

The Beatles: Rock Band

★★★★½

MTV Games/Harmonix

When *The Beatles: Rock Band* really clicks - when you're pounding out "Helter Skelter" hard enough to get blisters on your fingers; when you're loping through the bass line of "Dear Prudence"; when it starts feeling like you are, in fact, the Walrus - the experience is almost eerie. It begins to seem like the Beatles didn't write and record these songs so much as construct them - so sturdily that they translate with absurd ease to an interactive format that was four decades away. The Beatles' musical development lends itself oddly well to a game - the songs become both more difficult to play and more rewarding as the band's story moves along: It's a lot more fun to play "And Your Bird Can Sing" than, say, "I Wanna Be Your Man."

That said, unlike the Beatles' music - and the original *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* games - there's nothing

particularly revolutionary here. Aside from the ability to sing in three-part harmony (a frippery that few users are likely to exploit), the gameplay is familiar: You hit the correct color at the proper time and score points. But thanks to richly detailed and artful graphics - highlighted by the psychedelic images that pop up once the Beatles quit playing concerts - it is the most refined music video game ever. From the Beatles' facial expressions to the signs at Shea Stadium, there's enough verisimilitude that it's forgivable when no animated Eric Clapton turns up for "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," or when cartoon Ringo is shown playing drums on "Back in the U.S.S.R." (it was really Paul).

In any case, Starr may be the big winner here: Anyone who has questioned his chops will repent after failing for the 10th time to make it through "Birthday."

BRIAN HIATT



MAGICAL TOUR
 Rock Band nails Beatles aesthetic.

Pete Yorn and Scarlett Johansson ★★½

Break Up Atco/Rhino

Concept album fails to achieve moody sexiness



PETE YORN HAS said that he wanted to make a duets record "in the spirit of Serge

Gainsbourg and Brigitte Bardot," but there's none of that famous French lechery here. If anything, this breezy Americana set shares conceptual DNA with She and Him, Zooey Deschanel's project with M. Ward: Hot indie actress plays tambourine girl to underappreciated singer-songwriter dude, fulfilling skinny-boy fantasies. Scarlett Johansson sticks to what she knows best - acting - doing her finest old-fashioned country girl on the first single, "Relator," while Yorn strummy-strums his guitar with visions of Big Star in his head. (Literally: They also cover Chris Bell's "I Am the Cosmos.") *Break Up's* nine songs have plenty of sweet harmonies, but there's just no sexual chemistry between these two friends. Even "I Don't Know What to Do" - the album's big breakup anthem - is less like a kiss-off than a peck on the forehead. MELISSA MAERZ

Key Tracks: "Relator," "I Am the Cosmos"



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FRICKE'S PICKS

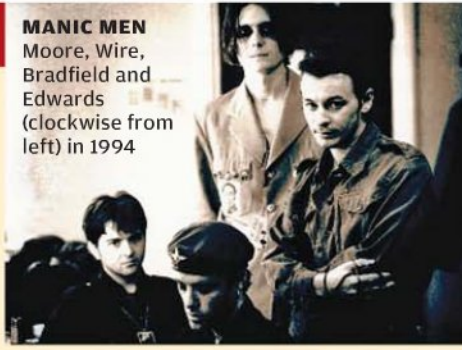
By David Fricke

Dead Man Talking

On February 1st, 1995, **Richey Edwards** - the emotionally troubled guitarist-lyricist of the Welsh band **Manic Street Preachers**, a young man who once carved "4 REAL" into his arm with a razor blade during an interview to prove he meant every word he said - left a London hotel and vanished from the face of the Earth. His car was found next to a river, and his body was never recovered. Last year, Edwards' family declared him presumed dead. The surviving Manics - singer-guitarist **James Dean Bradfield**, drummer **Sean Moore** and bassist **Nicky Wire** - continued to set aside his share of the band's royalties in case he returned.

He has, in an odd way, on the Manics' new album, *Journal for Plague Lovers* (Columbia). Before he vaporized, Edwards - who wrote like a tormented ninja-intellectual mix of Noam Chomsky, Public Enemy and the primal-scream John Lennon - left behind notebooks of verses. From that cache, Bradfield, Moore and Wire have completed 13 new songs that are their most exhilarating work since the polemic-glam slams *Everything Must Go* (1996) and *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours* (1998). This is severe, lashing excitement - rusted-reveille guitars, garage-fidelity drumming and the stark alarm of Bradfield's high sour-pop tenor - that actually jumps back to the original four's street-fighting-rock spin on Guns n' Roses on records such as their 1992 debut, *Generation Terrorists*. In fact, the soaring basics here of "Peeled Apples," "Me and Ste-

MANIC MEN
Moore, Wire, Bradfield and Edwards (clockwise from left) in 1994



phen Hawking" and "Marlon J.D." remind me most of a 1992 show I saw at CBGB, where the enraged Manics - and an especially furious Edwards - tried to rouse a stiff pack of show-me Yanks. The band lost that battle but did it with you'll-remember-us wrath. They were right - I did.

Through his lyrics, Edwards haunts this viscera like a phantom suddenly resuming old arguments. When Bradfield opens "She Bathed Herself in a Bath of Bleach" with the lines "She'd walk on broken glass for love/She thought burnt skin would please her lover," that's the Edwards who once scarred himself to make a point. But Edwards' sharp wit is well represented: The rude-U2 romp "Jackie Collins Existential Question Time" comes with a great adultery-and-Catholic-doctrine joke and the chorus "Mummy, what's a sex pistol?" It's as if the Manics wanted another chance to make a record with their lost mate somewhere in the room - and to prove that, regardless of where he went and why, his art and mind were alive right up to the moment he became air.

Vivian Girls

★★★★½

Everything Goes Wrong
In the Red

Brooklyn ladies bash out good-time punk



THE VIVIAN Girls' greatest claim to fame is that they were part of a recent *Jeopardy* question about "really cute" Brooklyn bands. They should be known for their dreamlike riot of punk, surf guitar and slumber-party fun. For this album, the ladies stepped up their studio time from their debut, which means they spent six days recording instead of three. But their "1-2-3-go!" rush - built around Cassie Ramone's scratchy guitar and Ali Koehler's insistent drums - is a thrill. Bonus: Song titles like "I Have No Fun" and "I'm Not Asleep" could be T-shirt slogans for hipster burnouts.

MELISSA MAERZ

Key Tracks: "I Have No Fun," "You're My Guy"



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Girls ★★★½

Album

True Panther/Matador

Ex-street kid reconciles with scary past



BORN INTO the extremist Children of God cult before escaping to live on the streets at 16, Christopher Owens knows misery. But on *Girls*' debut, he's made peace with his past and crafted ace tunes to go with his tales of redemption. Owens sings about dancing and hanging with California girls on gorgeous songs that range from Buddy Holly-style rock to prom balladry to the strummy epic "Hellhole Rattrace." On "Lust for Life," he's "fucked in the head" but trying to "make a brand-new start." Judging by *Album*, he's on the right track.

KEVIN O'DONNELL

Key Tracks: "Headache," "Summertime"

Queen Latifah ★★★

Persona

Flavor Unit

Her Majesty returns to rap but deepens identity crisis



WITH EVERY hyphen she adds, it's harder to tell who rapper-turned-actor-turned-spokeswoman-turned-lounge-singer-turned-rapper-again Queen Latifah is. *Persona* is billed as her return to hip-hop, but aside from "The Light" and "Over the Mountain," there's no hint of the sassy MC who debuted two decades ago. Pharrell Williams and Dre of Cool and Dre provide the same synth beats they probably offered Raven-Symoné, and guest MC Missy Elliott outshines the Queen, who's so bored she's rapping about exhaustion: "Feeling like the longest week of my life," she says. Us too, lady.

M.M.

Key Tracks: "The Light," "Over the Mountain"

Sean Paul ★★

Imperial Blaze

VP/Atlantic

"Get Busy" singer tries to retain charts death grip



SEAN PAUL has been as ubiquitous as oxygen for much of the 2000s, and he seems maniacally determined to maintain his pop dominance. Paul said in 2007 that his next disc would focus on youth violence in Jamaica, but there's little sign of that on the party-hearty *Imperial Blaze*, which is full of snazzy electro beats and tunes that sound like pale versions of past hits. Songs like the lascivious "Bruk Out" – where Paul orders his lady to "spread it" for him "like a queen-size sheet" – are just too slick to be much fun.

CHRISTIAN HOARD

Key Tracks: "So Fine," "Pepperpot"

BLK JKS

★★★★½

After Robots

Secretly Canadian

Roaring South African prog-rock: Who knew?



WITH AMERICAN indie acts like Vampire Weekend borrowing from African music, it's fitting that Johannesburg's BLK JKS moved to the indie outpost of Bloomington, Indiana, to record their debut. *After Robots* is full-on polyglot prog-rock: Like the Mars Volta, BLK JKS' best moments are roaring fusions – South African-style chants laid over Lindani Buthelezi's scorched-earth guitar leads and Tshepang Ramoba's amazingly busy drumming. There are bits of jazz and dub, but mostly these guys want to rock. When they do it their way, they sound like nothing else.

WILL HERMES

Key Tracks: "Molalatladi," "Lakeside," "Skeleton"

BOOTLEG

Madonna

August 11th, 2009
Parken Stadium,
Copenhagen

On one hand, bootleg recordings of Madonna shows – like this audience tape from the final leg of her 2008-09 Sticky and Sweet Tour – seem incomplete without the elaborate stage and dancers. But without the spectacle to distract you, you can focus on what amounts to a great remix collection of Madonna hits. The original music to "Dress You Up" has been replaced by a brilliant mash-up of "God Save the Queen" and "My Sharona"; "Like a Prayer" becomes a rave-ready monster jam; and "La Isla Bonita" has been reimagined as a Gogol Bordello gypsy-punk number. The best part is "You Must Love Me" from *Evita*: It's little more than Madonna, some acoustic guitars and a fiddle. She should drop the props more often.

ANDY GREENE

Brooks and Dunn ★★½

#1s... And Then Some

Arista Nashville

Bro-bro duo roll out two decades of country hits



BEFORE THE days of Montgomery Gentry or Big and Rich, there were Brooks and Dunn, popwise neohillbillies keeping the cause of the good ol' nice guy alive in the Age of Shania. The pair have said they're retiring, but this best-of proves the almost metronomic consistency of their rolling, revved-up honky-tonk. They liked girls who looked like Madonna but listened to Merle, and their rock-friendly formula was so Purple American that Bush and Obama both pumped the big-dreaming "Only in America" at their party conventions – inspiring many, annoying few and offending no one.

JON DOLAN

Key Tracks: "Neon Moon," "Only in America"

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FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

BY PETER TRAVERS

THREE FOR THE OSCAR SHOW *Avatar* with Sam Worthington, *Precious* with Gabourey Sidibe and *Nine* with a bubbly Daniel Day-Lewis (clockwise from top).



Hunting Oscar Gold

OF THE 100-PLUS MOVIES OPENING BETWEEN NOW AND NEW YEAR'S EVE, A FEW blockbusters will defy the limping economy and spew profits – hello, *Avatar*, 3-D spawn of James Cameron, and *New Moon*, werewolf spawn of vampiric *Twilight*. But what counts – OK, money always counts – is which of these contenders will play down and dirty in the Oscar Olympics. This year, the Academy has decided to double the Best Picture nominees from five to 10. And since the first eight months of 2009 have produced, what, two sure contenders (*The Hurt Locker* and *Up*), the field is wide open. Paramount suits, rich from two summer shitstorms (*Transformers 2* and *G.I. Joe*), decided to push Martin Scorsese's thrilling *Shutter Island* into 2010, claiming they lack the funds to launch this triumph for Scorsese and star Leonardo DiCaprio. WTF and what a loss. Here is a selective list of fall movies I've seen whole or in part or just have a vibe about that are ripe to sprint past the Hollywood swill and into the winner's circle.

The Informant!

OPENING SEPTEMBER 18TH

A NEVER-BETTER MATT Damon put on 30 pounds of fast-food flab to play Mark Whitacre, an exec who blew the whistle on the money-laundering at his agribusiness company. Stifle that yawn. Damon and director Steven Soderbergh aren't into true-story blah-blah-blah. Their wild ride of a movie takes surreal comic aim at the debased values of our society. The laughs sting like hell.

A Serious Man

OPENING OCTOBER 2ND

LARRY GOPNIK (MICHAEL Stuhlbarg) is a college prof stagnating in the Midwest circa 1967. "I want to be a serious man," he says. But he keeps getting his head banged against the wall, literally and figuratively, from wife, kids, academics, even his rabbi. It's a comedy Job would love. From the Coen bros, Joel and Ethan, whose father is the inspiration for Larry. Meaning the humor is served black, no sweetener.

Capitalism: A Love Story

OPENING OCTOBER 2ND

FORGET "TWILIGHT," HERE'S the vampire movie of the year, as Michael Moore shows Wall Street sucking the money out of Joe Citizen's wallet. Attackers will label it more lefty bullshit from the agent provocateur behind *Bowling for Columbine*, *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Sicko*. But there's something satisfying about watching Moore stage a citizen's arrest on the board of AIG. You'll ha-ha till it hurts.

An Education

OPENING OCTOBER 9TH

HIGH ON THE LIST OF THE year's best movies, *An Education* offers a thrilling new star and remarkable actress in Carey Mulligan (see box), playing a Brit schoolgirl, 16, seduced by England swinging into the 1960s and an older sophisticate (Peter Sarsgaard) polishing her intellect in and out of bed. Nick Hornby brilliantly adapted the memoir by



GEORGE CLOONEY: LIVE AND ANIMATED As a corporate firing machine in *Up in the Air* and (top right) the fantastic Mr. Fox.



Lynn Barber. Lone Scherfig directs as if a life is at stake. It is.

Where the Wild Things Are

OPENING OCTOBER 16TH

BRINGING MAURICE SENDAK'S 1963 children's classic to life with actors in foam rubber suits and computer-generated faces sounds, well, dreadful. I'm thinking it won't be because director Spike Jonze (*Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*) is just the visionary talent to nurture Sendak's tale of a boy (Max Records) who creates a fantasy world full of wild things that embody his

own fears about the real one. Screenwriter Dave Eggers says he and Jonze worked against the kid-friendly moral lessons that would tame the wild.

The Road

OPENING OCTOBER 16TH

"SO DEPRESSING!" THAT'S the complaint I hear from people contemplating a movie based on Cormac McCarthy's novel about a father (Viggo Mortensen) and son (Kodi Smit-McPhee) navigating a post-apocalyptic world sucked dry of color and humanity. Great, then, go wallow in Sandra Bullock goo. Aus-

sie director John Hillcoat has found exactly the right actor in Mortensen to convey abiding faith among the ruins.

Amelia

OPENING OCTOBER 23RD

SHOOTING FOR HER THIRD Oscar, following *Boys Don't Cry* and *Million Dollar Baby*, Hilary Swank takes on the role of aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, whose plane was lost in 1937 in a flight over the Pacific. It helps that director Mira Nair (*Salaam Bombay!*) is no biopic lackey. She follows her own nose for truth and beauty.

Precious

OPENING NOVEMBER 6TH

LAST YEAR, A LITTLE MOVIE from out of nowhere – that would be *Slumdog Millionaire* – snuck up and hit Oscar pay dirt. Don't be too surprised if history repeats itself. *Precious*, subtitled "Based on the

For Fall, a Rising Young Star

Carey Mulligan, 24, talks about becoming Oscar's new It girl in 'An Education'

Going from supporting roles on film (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Public Enemies*) and stage (*The Seagull*) to the star spot can throw an actress. But Carey Mulligan is now front and center. In *An Education*, playing 16-year-old Jenny, a British schoolgirl seduced by a jet-setting, thirty-ish cad (Peter Sarsgaard), Mulligan's breakthrough performance fires up memories of the young Audrey Hepburn and Julie Christie. Expect a shower of awards. I need a quick education on Carey Mulligan. Who is she?

Oh, God, I don't know [laughs]. I can be terribly serious about things, or absurdly silly. I'm basically all about my work. I get really violently upset when things go wrong. When I do a job, I get consumed by it. Jenny is told she is clever and pretty and warned that men don't like clever. That was the Sixties. Now?

It's probably true of a younger girl going out with older men. But today I think a man would want so much more from me than pretty. There are



always going to be women who are very traditional, but I believe we've moved on. Did you share the same coming-of-age pangs as your character?

She is an adult at 16, whereas I was a child at boarding school until 18, an innocent. She jumped into the adult world.

My trip was gentler. *Pride and Prejudice* was my first job and the closest I came to growing up quickly.

Is it intimidating that pundits see you with awards in your hand?

Terrifying. I'm a bit of an old soul. I don't want to walk red carpets wearing something shocking. I want to blend in. I can wear mad clothes when I'm doing a part, but just as me I'm happy in trousers and T-shirts. But we'll see how the year pans out. You'll probably see me in front of some magazine wearing heels and a mini.

Forget the Oscar talk, the headline I want to read is "Carey Mulligan, Hottie of the Year!"

[Laughs] That's it, my secret ambition.

Novel *Push* by Sapphire," is a raw and riveting human drama about a morbidly obese Harlem teenager (the astonishing Gabourey Sidibe), pregnant for the second time by her father, struggling to jump the hurdles erected by illiteracy and her mother (Mo'Nique, shockingly good as a force of twisted nature). If you're thinking TV-movie formula, director Lee Daniels will snap you out of it. His film is electrifying.

Fantastic Mr. Fox

OPENING NOVEMBER 13TH

LEAVE IT TO WES ANDERSON (*Rushmore*) to make literate stop-motion magic out of Roald Dahl's children's book by retaining the author's heart of darkness as farmers lay waste to a community of foxes. George Clooney, voicing Mr. Fox, is tone-perfect in a movie that deserves to be called groundbreaking.

Nine

OPENING NOVEMBER 25TH

DIRECTOR ROB MARSHALL brought *Chicago* from Broadway to screen and won the Best Picture Oscar. Now he takes on the 1982 musical *Nine*, based on Fellini's semiautobiographical *8 1/2*, and cast noted non-Italian Daniel Day-Lewis as the Fellini-esque director juggling a wife (Marion Cotillard), muses and mistresses (Penélope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Kate Hudson). A gamble that might just pay off big time.

Invictus

OPENING DECEMBER 11TH

MORGAN FREEMAN PLAYING Nelson Mandela in a movie



TWILIGHT STRIKES AGAIN Vampire Robert Pattinson (left) vies with werewolf Taylor Lautner to put the bite on Kristen Stewart.

Pushing for Profits

The great god Box Office offers its own fall harvest

THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON" (NOVEMBER 20th) might just hack it as the fall's fattest cash cow. The first film from Stephenie Meyer's four-book series of bloodsucking lore collected nearly \$400 million worldwide. And that was before Robert Pattinson, as vegan vampire Edward Cullen, found his suitable-for-sucking face on every tween's bedroom wall. It could hurt that Pattinson cedes screen time in the sequel to Taylor Lautner as Jacob, the werewolf who fights Edward for the human heart of Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart). But my guess is it'll double the pleasure of Twi-hards who won't care if critics snicker. They did the first time. Like that mattered.

The Vampire's Assistant (October 23rd) doesn't have a thing to do with *Twilight*, but the filmmakers are probably hoping you won't notice. Oh, wait. Paul Weitz, brother of *New Moon* director Chris Weitz, helms this tale of a teen who serves a vampire, played (this is a good thing) by John C. Reilly.

This Is It (October 28th). Audiences who couldn't get enough of Michael Jackson *after* he died will revel in this concert film culled from hundreds of hours of rehearsal and backstage footage for the 50 shows Jackson was scheduled to do in London this summer. A macabre memorial.

2012 (November 13th) gives *ID4* director Roland Emmerich another chance to destroy the world unless John Cusack stops him. Ugh!

A Christmas Carol (November 6th) stars a performance-captured Jim Carrey (he couldn't do it live?) as Scrooge. Double ugh!



Jackson

directed by Clint Eastwood about the South African president's desire to use a 1995 rugby game to unite his country. If that doesn't sound like Oscar bait, what does?

The Lovely Bones

OPENING DECEMBER 11TH

ONLY THOSE WHO NEVER saw what Peter Jackson did with the dark materials of *Heavenly Creatures* would think the *Rings* lord a mismatch for Alice Sebold's heart-rending book about a 14-year-old girl (Saoirse Ronan) who from beyond the grave watches the man (Stanley Tucci) who raped and killed her.

Up in the Air

OPENING DECEMBER

GEORGE CLOONEY MAY HAVE found the role of his career as a corporate hitman who spends his life flying around the country firing poor bastards. Director Jason Reitman, after *Thank You for Smoking* and *Juno*, goes for the trifecta directing Walter Kirn's novel.

Avatar

OPENING DECEMBER 11TH

JAMES CAMERON HAS SPENT the decade since *Titanic* reinventing cinema with a 3-D epic about a paralyzed soldier (Sam Worthington) who reinvents himself as a blue 10-foot warrior on another planet. Recently, Cameron allowed audiences to see 16 minutes of *Avatar* in Imax theaters so they could "fondle the fabric of the film." I fondled twice as much footage. Enough to tell that in the right hands art and commerce can combine to create a film event.

Under the Radar



Penélope Cruz

Broken Embraces

Word out of Cannes said this tale of an actress (Penélope Cruz) in thrall to her director repped a lesser teaming of Cruz and director Pedro Almodóvar. *Mierda*, as the Spanish would say. It's hot-blooded, haunting and totally embraceable.

The Messenger

Woody Harrelson and Ben Foster are outstanding as soldiers assigned to notify families when a loved one dies on Iraq duty. Screenwriter and first-time director Oren Moverman brings bruising wit to a film that will shake you - hard.

Pirate Radio

What if nutso Brits (led by Bill Nighy) and a Yank (Philip Seymour Hoffman) spent the Sixties beaming rock from a boat, despite censors? They do in this rip-roaring Richard Curtis comedy, loosely based on fact, wired to the spirit of rock defiance.

The Men Who Stare at Goats

George Clooney turns up this fall as an animated fox, a corporate hound and now a military psychic in this (sort of) true story about soldiers who, well, stare and learn. Rookie director Grant Heslov blends dark humor and head-scratching.

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[Cont. from 61] way? Or made it more of a challenge?

Not to get too deep here, but the most valuable thing I can think of is to be grateful for suffering. That is a sublime feeling, and completely inexplicable and illogical, but no one doesn't suffer. So the degree to which you can be aware of your own humanity is the degree to which you can accept, with open eyes, your suffering. To be grateful for your suffering is to be grateful for your humanity, because what else are you going to do – say, “No, thanks”? It's there. “Smile and accept,” said Mother Teresa. And she was talking to people who had it rough. That's not how you make jokes, though.

Getting back to jokes, do you think Bush was a better president for your comedy?

President Bush was an excellent model of incurious authority. But for the last year and a half of his presidency, I almost never mentioned him, because everything that could be said had been said. Satire usually exists in opposition to power or as commentary on power, and Bush stopped being powerful way before he left office. So for the last 18 months to two years of the Bush presidency, he stopped being my model, and we returned to the core principle. And the core principle is that I'm a well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot – and that exists whether Bush is in the White House or Obama is there.

So in a way, is Obama better for your character because there's more for him to be outraged by?

I'm having a great time with Obama. In some ways, it's a more freeing game, because not all things are known about him yet. The page is still being written on him, and the common ignorances about him are emerging. Socialism was a good one for a while; now that's a little played out. Or the Birther thing, about him not being born in the United States – who could have made that up? I don't exist in relationship to the president. I exist in relationship to common ignorances, and those will never go away.

When you went to the White House to film Obama for your Iraq trip, what was it like to have the president of the country play along with one of your skits?

It was hard for me to conceive that I was going to the White House to actually do a bit with the president of the United States that we had written for him. Matter of fact, I wasn't going to go. I thought, “If I leave, I won't be able to get any writing done that day.”

I think Obama crushed it. We did two takes, but we used the first take. It was surreal and wonderful, and I hope I get to do something like that with whomever the next president is. It was a great joy and a great honor, the same way

it was an honor to do the White House Correspondents' Dinner when Bush was president.

Why do you think your appearance at the dinner became such a scandal?

I had no perception that anything was wrong at the time. When I was doing the Correspondents' Dinner, I was specifically making an equation between myself and President Bush. If you look at the opening of it, I wasn't up there as O'Reilly. I was up there as Bush, and that was the whole idea.

Right after the dinner was over, something felt weird, because people weren't making eye contact with me. But it was a few days until someone made me go online and said, “You should look at this.” I had no perception that people thought I was throwing Molotov cocktails. I just went and did a job, and I thought I did a good job, and I wish more people had laughed. That's all I feel about it.

On your show, it's as if your character sees himself as more important than the news itself.

I don't have television screens behind

“I think my brothers and sisters are way funnier than I am – and they think they're funnier than I am too.”

me like Brian Williams does, or even like Jon Stewart uses. I don't have a newsroom through which news comes to you. I am the news. Behind me, I have a star. There are radial lines coming out from my body in the background and on the pedestal where my desk is. And that's purposeful. I am Jesus at the center of the Last Supper. All the architectural lines converge on me.

So you built the idea right into the set?

That was the instruction I gave my designer. I said, “I am the news. I translate nothing. I am not a medium. I am not a member of the media, because I'm not a vessel. I am it.”

Right, and your character's opinion often winds up being reported in the actual news as if it were real. By drawing on your improv roots, you've created this bizarre echo chamber.

That started early on. We would talk about something, then it would show up on the news. And then we would talk about how people would talk about what we had talked about. I realized that the show, at its purest expression, is a pebble that we throw into the puddle of the news, and then we report on our own rip-

ples. That's how I describe it to people who are trying to understand what we do, even staff members. We take what's in the air and codify it into a turd you can see.

Do you ever feel constrained by the character's limitations?

No, never. I'm in complete control of him. He can be what I want him to be.

Does your wife ever give you any advice on the direction of your career?

Absolutely. Any major decision I make, I say, “I'm going to talk to my wife about it.” I call her my “breathtakingly level-headed girl.” I'm not a dumb guy, but she's smart and very clearheaded about things. I approach things very emotionally, and she does not, strangely enough. If I need to know if what I'm writing about still appeals to humans, I'll show it to her. I married a human being. Thank God I didn't marry another comedian, or else I'd be doing terribly, terribly dark humor all the time, because there's truly nothing like the escalation of shock in a writers' room.

In real life, when you just feel kicked around or something goes wrong, do you ever think, “My character would never accept this”?

The only time I ever use him in real life is if I have a difficult phone call I have to make, usually dealing with someone outside the network. I'll have somebody sit on the couch, and I'll say, “This is going to be kind of a performance, and I need an audience.” Because if no one was there, I'd just say, “OK,” and accept no for an answer.

I have friends who like to pretend they're on a reality show, so that they always feel someone is watching and judging their behavior.

God does that too.


I've heard you used to be a big Dungeons & Dragons player.

From 1977, after they first put out the game.

Do you still consider yourself a nerd?

I didn't think of myself as a nerd even when I was a nerd, so that probably proves that I am definitely still a nerd. But the same reason why I don't care what shirt I'm wearing is that I don't care what I'm called.


Right. And that's exactly what enables you to...

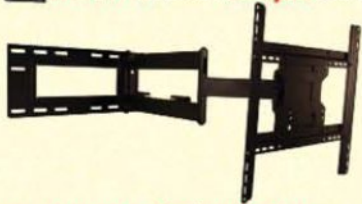
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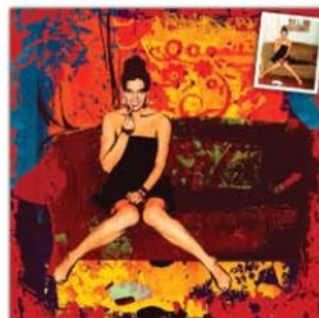
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CHARTS

ITUNES TOP 10 SONGS

- Miley Cyrus**
"Party in the U.S.A." - Walt Disney
- Black Eyed Peas**
"I Gotta Feeling" - Will.i.am/Interscope
- Jay-Z**
"Run This Town" - Roc-A-Fella
- Jay Sean**
"Down" - Cash Money
- Kings of Leon**
"Use Somebody" - RCA
- Cobra Starship**
"Good Girls Go Bad" - Decaydance/Fueled by Ramen
- Disney's Friends for Change**
"Send It On" - Walt Disney
- Pitbull**
"Hotel Room Service" - Jive
- Shakira**
"She Wolf" - Epic
- Taylor Swift**
"You Belong With Me" - Big Machine

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COLLEGE RADIO TOP 10 ALBUMS

- Fruit Bats**
The Ruminant Band - Sub Pop
- Wilco**
Wilco (The Album) - Nonesuch
- The Dead Weather**
Horehound - Third Man
- Japandroids**
Post-Nothing - Polyvinyl
- YACHT**
See Mystery Lights - DFA
- Portugal. The Man**
The Satanic Satanist - Equal Vision
- Wye Oak**
The Knot - Merge
- Modest Mouse**
No One's First, and You're Next - Epic
- Pissed Jeans**
King of Jeans - Sub Pop
- Throw Me the Statue**
Creaturesque - Secretly Canadian



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Top 40 Albums

- NEW** **Reba McEntire**
Keep On Loving You - Starstruck
- 1** **George Strait**
Twang - MCA Nashville
- NEW** **Third Eye Blind**
Ursa Major - Mega Collider
- 5** **Kings of Leon**
Only by the Night - RCA
- 3** **Black Eyed Peas**
The E.N.D. - Will.i.am/Interscope
- 2** **Neil Diamond**
Hot August Night/NYC - Columbia/Legacy
- 14** **Hannah Montana: The Movie**
Soundtrack - Walt Disney
- 9** **Taylor Swift**
Fearless - Big Machine
- 8** **Daughtry**
Leave This Town - 19/RCA
- 6** **NOW 31**
Various Artists - EMI/Universal/Zomba
- 7** **Maxwell**
BLACKsummers'night - Columbia
- NEW** **Sean Paul**
Imperial Blaze - VP/Atlantic
- 13** **Zac Brown Band**
The Foundation - Roar/Bigger Picture/Homegrown/Atlantic
- NEW** **Ledisi**
Turn Me Loose - Verve Forecast
- 12** **Hannah Montana 3**
Soundtrack - Walt Disney
- 17** **Jason Aldean**
Wide Open - Broken Bow
- 16** **Lady Gaga**
The Fame - Streamline/KonLive/Cherrytree/Interscope
- NEW** **Mutemath**
Armistice - Teleprompt
- 15** **Fabulous**
Loso's Way - Desert Storm/Def Jam
- 10** **Justin Moore**
Justin Moore - Valory
- 11** **Sugarland**
Live on the Inside - Mercury Nashville
- 19** **Eminem**
Relapse - Web/Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
- 22** **Darius Rucker**
Learn to Live - Capitol Nashville
- 24** **Nickelback**
Dark Horse - Roadrunner
- 18** **Demi Lovato**
Here We Go Again - Hollywood
- 20** **Gloriana**
Gloriana - Emblem/Reprise/Warner Bros.
- 29** **Shinedown**
The Sound of Madness - Atlantic
- 27** **Wizards of Waverly Place**
Soundtrack - Walt Disney
- 21** **Kidz Bop Kids**
Kidz Bop 16 - Razor & Tie
- 4** **Cobra Starship**
Hot Mess - Decaydance/Fueled by Ramen
- 30** **Sugarland**
Love on the Inside - Mercury Nashville
- 34** **Lady Antebellum**
Lady Antebellum - Capitol Nashville
- 26** **Jonas Brothers**
Lines, Vines and Trying Times - Hollywood
- 43** **Keith Urban**
Defying Gravity - Capitol Nashville
- 31** **Brad Paisley**
American Saturday Night - Arista Nashville
- 28** **Green Day**
21st Century Breakdown - Reprise
- NEW** **Sister Hazel**
Release - Croakin' Poets
- 36** **Kenny Chesney**
Greatest Hits II - BNA
- 35** **Rascal Flatts**
Unstoppable - Lyric Street
- 44** **Beyoncé**
I Am... Sasha Fierce - Music World/Columbia



Reba Strikes Back

Thirty-three years after her debut single, Reba McEntire scores the second Number One LP of her career. The disc features the country hit "Strange."



Semi-Charmed Hit

Third Eye Blind land their first Top 10 hit with their fourth LP (first offered for \$3.99 at Amazon), which sold 48,876 copies its first week out.



Diamond Is Forever

A sequel to the 1972 live set *Hot August Night*, Neil Diamond's Walmart exclusive was cut last year in New York. It's moved 96,028 units in two weeks.



Starship Troopers

The radio smash "Good Girls Go Bad" (featuring Leighton Meester) helped Cobra Starship's third disc sell 55,618 copies over two weeks - a career high.

00 chart position on August 26th, 2009
00 chart position on August 19th, 2009
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2ND Re-Entry
↑ Greatest Gainer
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From the Vault

RS 690, September 8th, 1994

TOP 10 SINGLES

- Boyz II Men**
"I'll Make Love to You" - Motown
- Lisa Loeb and Nine Stories**
"Stay (I Missed You)" - RCA
- John Mellencamp and Me'Shell NdegéOcello**
"Wild Night" - Mercury
- Babyface**
"When Can I See You" - Epic
- Changing Faces**
"Stroke You Up" - Big Beat
- Coolio**
"Fantastic Voyage" - Tommy Boy
- Elton John**
"Can You Feel the Love Tonight" - Hollywood
- All-4-One**
"I Swear" - Blitzz/Atlantic
- Warren G**
"This DJ" - Violator/RAL
- Ace of Base**
"Don't Turn Around" - Arista



On the Cover

"I'm not afraid to question my own sexual orientation. I'm not afraid to think about things you aren't supposed to think about. I do wonder what it would be like to kill somebody, though I'm not going to do it. I don't want to do it. But I know why people idolize serial killers." -Trent Reznor

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